

The copyright of this thesis rests with the University of Cape Town. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

**School management and the development of professional learning
communities: A comparative case study**

Carol Jean Ritchie

**A minor dissertation in partial fulfillment for the award of the degree of
Masters of Education**

**Faculty of the Humanities
University of Cape Town
2010**

DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Carol Jean Ritchie

30 March 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank Dr Heather Jacklin for making my studies a personal growth experience by consistently guiding, nurturing and inspiring me.

I would also like to thank my father, Victor John Ritchie, for the time that he so unselfishly sacrificed proofreading my dissertation.

My thanks also extend to the research department of the WCED and the principals and staff members at both research schools for their co-operation.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, friends and colleagues for their support and their interest shown in my progress throughout the period of my study.

University Of Cape Town

ABSTRACT

This study compares the management practices at two primary schools with a similar socio-economic background but vastly differing academic results. I identify the extent to which these practices nurture the development of a Professional Learning Community. The data were collected mainly by using semi-formal open-ended interviews and surveys. The Grade 3 and Grade 6 Literacy and Numeracy tests results of the Western Cape Education Department were used as a benchmark to compare the achievement of the learners at the two schools. I chose a comparative case study approach which lends itself to an in-depth analysis of practices in two contexts.

My study found substantial differences between the management and leadership practices at the two schools. The following practices appear to be associated with the school producing better results: (1) They had systems and practices to support collaborative work, (2) they ensured that monitoring and moderation of planned and assessed work occurred, (3) they focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning, (4) they adapted practices in order to improve learner achievement, (5) there was evidence of mutual care, respect, and collective responsibility, (6) they visited schools producing better results to inform their practices, (7) they operated within a cluster of schools formed with the aim of improving teaching and learning, (8) problems were addressed and resolved as soon as they became apparent, and, (9) the School Management Team operated collaboratively. These practices created platforms for collaboration and nurtured a positive morale.

In general, these practices were not present or well-developed in the school where learners achieved poorer results. Consequently, the potential positive contributions of staff were not utilised. There was limited collaboration and high levels of frustration were present.

ACRONYMS

CTLI	Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute
F Phase	Foundation Phase
HOD	Head of department
InterSen Phase	Intermediate and Senior Phase
LitNum	Literacy and Numeracy
PL	Post-level
PLC	Professional Learning Community
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMT	School Management Team
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1	Conceptual framework.....	19
Table 1A	WCED systemic tests: Literacy results at the two schools 2002 - 2009.....	22
Table 1B	WCED systemic tests: Numeracy results at the two schools 2002 - 2009	22
Table 2	Teacher numbers and learner-teacher ratios	24
Table 3	Age, gender and qualifications of teachers	25
Table 4	Job descriptions of parents.....	25
Table 5	Respondent selection for each school	30
Table 6	Framework for data collection.....	33
Table 7	Analytic framework	37

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACRONYMS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
RESEARCH QUESTION	1
RATIONALE	2
CONTEXT: A CRISIS IN EDUCATION	3
WHAT IS NEEDED TO HELP SCHOOLS IMPROVE?	5
AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY.....	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
WHY TRANSFORM THE SCHOOL INTO A PLC?	9
THE ORIGIN OF THE TERM PLC	10
THE PLC IN CONTEXT	11
ENSURING THAT STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE	12
A CULTURE OF MUTUAL CARE, RESPECT AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY.....	14
COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	16
CONCLUSION	17
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.....	18
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN.....	21
CASE STUDY APPROACH.....	21
CASE SELECTION.....	21

CONTEXT OF SCHOOLS.....	24
DATA COLLECTION	28
TRANSCRIPTIONS.....	32
DATA ANALYSIS	32
VALIDITY.....	33
RESEARCH ETHICS	34
LIMITATIONS TO STUDY	35
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS.....	36
ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK	36
CASE STUDY 1: MEADOWLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL.....	37
CASE STUDY 2: COLWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL	56
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....	76
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	76
IMPLICATIONS	82
REFERENCES.....	84
APPENDICES:.....	87

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH QUESTION

This study compares management practices in two schools with similar socio-economic status but vastly differing results. The Grade 3 and 6 Literacy and Numeracy (LitNum) testing of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) was used as the benchmark to compare the achievement of the learners at the two schools in the systemic LitNum testing.

Previous research has shown that there are many factors impacting on the attainment of learners at schools, besides the socio-economic status of the communities in which the learners reside. Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard (2006:182) assert that *"a number of studies have confirmed that practices within schools may have considerable effect on student outcomes."* A few examples of the contextual factors that hamper attainment within schools could be: poor social and physical facilities, weak and unaccountable leadership, ineffective teaching and learning practices, administrative dysfunction, poor communication, inadequate disciplinary and grievance procedures, poor relationships with surrounding communities, poor communications and interactions with education departments, and lack of a sense of responsibility among principals, teachers and students (Christie and Lingard, 2000:6). 'Out of school' causal factors include alcoholism, domestic violence, poverty, and sexual abuse (Lingard, Hayes, Mills and Christie, 2003:1).

While there are many possible reasons for differences in achievement, the question that drives this study is whether differences in test results, as indicators of productive learning and teaching practices across the school, can be related to differences in management practices. I chose to focus on the impact of school management on the formation of a Professional Learning Community (PLC) because the literature suggests that a culture of effective learning and teaching is associated with PLCs, as Chapter 2 will show. While much of the literature on management focuses on the role of the principal, this study foregrounds the holistic role of the School Management Team (SMT), or management, in the development of a PLC. It attempts to ascertain whether there is an association between learner achievement and the presence of a PLC. My research thus focuses on the following

question: *‘How do management practices relate to the development of a Professional Learning Community?’*

Through the help of the WCED Research Department, I located two primary schools with similar socio-economic status but different LitNum results. My intention was to study the management practices of these two schools and discuss how these relate to the development of a PLC.

RATIONALE

My motivation for choosing to focus on the PLC lies in the findings of various writers that there is a close link between improved learner results and the existence of a PLC. Firstly, DuFour and Eaker (1998:152) state that a *“professional learning community ... enables the school to foster a results orientation in its most critical area – student learning”*. Furthermore, according to Hayes et al (2006:185), Talbert and McLaughlin argued that the *“teacher community ... could be a primary unit for improving education quality”*.

As a primary school teacher, I often found that the teachers who were not in formal management positions had innovative ideas. More often than not these ideas were unable to permeate the culture of the school, either because they were not acknowledged by those in positions of authority, or because too few structures were created for the sharing of these ideas. This was frequently detrimental not only to improving learner achievement but also to the tone of the school and the morale of the staff. It is also a well-known fact that people become more committed to the upliftment of the culture of an organisation, or maintaining it if it already is of a high standard, when they feel acknowledged or utilised. Additionally, I feel that the potential outcomes of schools operating as a community with various stakeholders working in collaboration with each other, and generating mutual growth and learning, is often underrated by the principal and other SMT members.

CONTEXT: A CRISIS IN EDUCATION

The legacy of inequality left behind by the Apartheid regime, and Bantu Education in particular, presents many challenges for school leaders in South Africa as they attempt to level the playing field. It is evident that equity in the educational context has not materialised, as the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' still exists. The Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation of 2004 illustrates this point where the best test results were attained by the historically privileged schools with a substantial gap between these results and those of the historically disadvantaged schools (Christie *et al.*, 2007:37). In South Africa, many historically disadvantaged schools are currently viewed as dysfunctional. In Taylor's 2006 review of mathematics results, only 20% of South Africa's schools were considered to be functioning adequately, while the remaining 80% were "*essentially dysfunctional*" (Christie *et al.*, 2007:38). The 80% in question were pre-dominantly in schools serving poor black communities.

Furthermore, international tests and various comparative tests with other African states and neighbouring countries indicate that schooling in South Africa is not particularly effective in terms of student attainment (Christie, *et al.*, 2007). Quite revealing, regarding the quality of education delivery in the majority of schools in South Africa, is the fact that many of the countries that outstripped South Africa in these 2005 tests, spend less money on their education systems than does South Africa (Christie *et al.*, 2007:36).

Western Cape results

Although international tests have shown that South Africa's results are cause for concern, the grade 12 examination results indicate that the Western Cape is much better than the other eight provinces in South Africa, yet still problematic.

Systemic testing

The systemic tests were first conducted in the Western Cape with the grade 3s in 2002, thereafter alternating between the grade 3s and grade 6s annually. The purpose of these systemic tests was to provide a standardised test for literacy and numeracy. A WCED media

release (2009) stated that 86% of the schools failed¹ to attain 40% in the numeracy test conducted from 2004 to 2009. Furthermore, this WCED media release indicates that the current performance levels for the systemic testing signify deterioration in results as the learner progresses through the system.

The grade 3 literacy average is 53.5%² and for numeracy is 35%, while the grade 6 results for literacy and numeracy are 44% and 14%, respectively. Additionally, as is evident from these results, the numeracy results are much lower than the literacy results in both grades. Although the average literacy result for the grade 3 testing has improved consistently from 17.8% in 2002 to 53.5% in 2008, the numeracy result has fluctuated over the four tests, moving from 37.1% (2002) to 37.3% (2004) to 31% (2006) and eventually settling at 35% in 2008 (WCED, 2009). The pattern for the grade 6 results is similar to that of the grade 3s. Although the average literacy result for the grade 6 testing has improved consistently from 35% in 2003 to 48.3% in 2009, the numeracy result has fluctuated over the four tests, moving from 15.6% (2003) to 17.2% (2005) to 14% (2007) and eventually settling at 17.4% in 2009 (WCED, 2010c).

Grade 12 examination

The grade 12 results denote, generally speaking, a crisis in South African education. The grade 12 examination is the most commonly regarded benchmark indicating the level of educational success in schools in South Africa. Although the Western Cape has consistently produced the best results out of the nine provinces in these examinations, the grade 12 pass rate in the Western Cape has dropped. While the 2004 examination showed an 85.1% pass rate, only 75.7% of the cohort of 2009 managed to pass (WCED, 2010b). Likewise, the national pass rate has also dropped from 62.5% in 2008 to 60.6% in 2009. Furthermore, the following statistics indicate that the number of schools underperforming³ in the Western Cape is steadily increasing. In 2006, 36 schools were identified as underperforming and in 2007 there were 54 schools. By 2008 this number increased to 74 schools, increasing yet again to 85 schools in 2009 (WCED, 2010b). Recent grade 12 Mathematics and Physical

¹ A minimum of 50% is deemed to be a pass.

² The percentages indicated are average percentages of the Western Cape schools participating in the LitNum testing.

³ Underperforming schools are classified by the WCED as those having less than a 60% grade 12 pass rate.

Science results also indicate a drop in the pass rate. While 65.2% of learners who wrote the Mathematics examination paper in 2008 passed, only 64.9% passed Physical Science in 2009, compared to the 71.2% in 2008 (WCED, 2010a). Additionally, only 52.9% of learners passed Physical Science in 2009 compared to 71.2% in 2008.

Drop-out rate

In addition to the startling results at both primary and high schools, the high drop out rate in schools furthermore indicates that serious problems exist in South Africa education. Only 45.9% of learners who had enrolled in grade 1 in the Western Cape in 1997 wrote the grade 12 examination in 2008. Of this remaining number of grade 12 learners, only 33% qualified for matriculation exemption (WCED, 2009).

WHAT IS NEEDED TO HELP SCHOOLS IMPROVE?

These poor results in primary and high schools, as well as the high drop-out rate, are considered to be a consequence of the majority of these schools being dysfunctional. According to Christie and Lingard (2000) “*ineffective teaching and learning practices*” is a possible causal contextual factor of schools often becoming dysfunctional. They emphasise that strong leadership is vital to the effective functioning of a school.

The primary task that must be accomplished by well functioning schools must include “*ensuring effective and enriched teaching for learning for all pupils and improving and further enriching teaching and learning for all pupils*” (James, 2007:34). In the opinion of Zaleznik (1989), dysfunctional schools are frequently caught up in the psychopolitics of the institution, that is, they are caught up and sidetracked by other matters that are not related to teaching and learning, but influencing it (cited in Christie and Lingard, 2000:9). Christie and Lingard (2000) are of the belief that efficient leaders keep the staff and students goal-directed. Christie *et al.* (2007:101) highlight the fact that many of the schools in South Africa, predominantly the township schools, have to deal with violence, gangs, substance abuse, as well as the effects of HIV/AIDS, poverty and unemployment. These factors impact negatively on the core task of teaching and learning. Christie and Lingard (2000:9) argue that organisations are vulnerable to collapse when they lose their core purposes. Often,

leaders at such schools are unable to involve students or staff, or both, in activities to promote personal growth and learning.

Committed school leaders attempt to find methods of coping with their failure to enable their school to perform its core purpose. These coping-mechanism-deficiencies include: denial, task avoidance, demotivation, lowering expectations of self and others, projection of blame, a sense of powerlessness and lack of agency (Christie *et al.*, 2007:33). The challenge exists for a more meaningful and realistic approach to leadership in the majority of historically disadvantaged schools to be addressed more urgently, with the hope of preventing these schools from becoming totally dysfunctional.

The CCOLT Study (1994) as well as a study by Christie, Potterton and others (1998) on resilient schools listed the key characteristics of successful schools to include leadership, centrality of teaching and learning, authority and discipline, and a culture of concern (cited in Christie *et al.*, 2007:27). Although there are differences in interpretation, recent literature (Slater, 2008; Stoll and Louis, 2007; James, 2007; Spillane, 2006; Robbins and Alvy, 2004) suggests that successful, resilient schools are those where good leadership is evident and where leadership is defined as extending beyond the principal alone. However, the imbalanced socio-cultural context in South Africa requires a style of leadership where more support can be offered to teachers in historically disadvantaged schools. For this to transpire, schools need re-culturing and organisational renewal. The practices of management need to be revisited so that the approach to leadership could be a more encompassing one, extending beyond the principal.

The WCED has introduced and implemented various courses, programmes and workshops for the capacity building of school managers. One such workplace-based programme that was introduced in 2007 is the Advanced Certificate in Education, a school management programme offered at three universities in the Western Cape. It was developed by the Directorate: Education Management and Governance Development in the Department of Education. One of the aims of this certificating programme is to “*empower/enable aspirant and practicing principals to develop the skills, knowledge, and values needed to lead and*

manage schools effectively and contribute to improving the delivery of education across the school system” (UCT, 2009:56).

This intervention is the latest attempt by the WCED to improve the management practices of schools.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study takes the form of a comparative case study, and is divided into five chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces the research question, and presents the rationale and significance of the study. It provides a brief background to the crisis in South African education, locates the study in relation to contextual factors impacting on learner achievement, describes the characteristics of resilient and dysfunctional schools, and lastly, describes the latest departmental intervention strategy regarding improving the management practices at schools.

Chapter 2 has two aims. Firstly, an overview of literature is provided, relating to the concept of a PLC. I begin with the benefit to schools operating as a PLC, explain the origin of the term PLC and look at the PLC in context. Secondly, I provide a conceptual framework for my study based on the theories of Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard (2006) and DuFour and Eaker (1998). They state that the creation of a PLC is the best way to ensure that the teaching and learning experience is maximised. I identify key characteristics of the PLC that have been discussed in my literature review as focal issues for this study.

Chapter 3 provides the rationale for the case study approach, explaining how the two schools were selected and giving an overview of the research site, data collection, transcriptions, data analysis, follow-up information, validity, limitations to the research, and research ethics. I also outline the methods used to analyse my data.

In Chapter 4 the analysis is reported. After presenting the analytic framework, the transcribed data is analysed around two main themes, namely, systems and practices for the

development of an optimal teaching and learning environment, and the consequences, firstly for Meadowlands Primary School and then Colworth Primary School.

In Chapter 5 I discuss my findings and provide concluding remarks. The findings for Meadowlands Primary School and Colworth Primary School are compared under the four themes, namely, management practices, mutual care, respect and collective responsibility, collaborative work, and teacher morale. The conceptual framework depicted in Chapter 2 of the literature review will be used as a reference when discussing my findings. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of implications for the researcher and a final overview of the findings.

University Of Cape Town

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature relating to school organisation, management practices and culture. In an attempt to underpin my research question, “*How do management practices relate to the development of a Professional Learning Community?*” I identify the characteristics that were found crucial to the existence of a PLC, as discussed in the literature. These elements form the basis of the conceptual framework for the comparative case study.

WHY TRANSFORM THE SCHOOL INTO A PLC?

Hayes *et al.* (2006) and DuFour and Eaker (1998) are of the opinion that transforming the school into a PLC is the best way to ensure optimal teaching and learning. Resources and expertise available to serve students are augmented when professional colleagues collaborate (James, 2007:35; Robbins and Alvy, 2004:76). Hayes *et al.* (2006:197) are of the opinion that creating opportunities for collaborative work “*acknowledges the structural and cultural challenges of spreading good practice from isolated pockets of individual classrooms across the school.*” In a similar vein, DuFour and Eaker (1998:266) state that the creation of small, supportive groups where teachers are encouraged to discuss their questions, concerns, and ideas reduces their sense of isolation. Furthermore, DuFour and Eaker are of the opinion that another benefit is that the members of a PLC will more readily adapt to change (p286), and that, generally, teachers at such schools “*turn aspirations into action and visions into reality*” (p27).

A study by Newmann, Wehlage, Louis and Kruse (as cited in Fullan, 2000:581) indicates that those schools that produce better results had the following practices in common: (1) they formed a PLC, (2) they focused on student work (through assessment), and (3) where necessary, they changed instructional practice to improve results. Lambert (cited in Hayes *et al.*, 2006:200) states that leadership must be entrenched in the school community as a whole where all learning occurs collectively and collaboratively. James (2007:35) argues that collaboration, through dialogue, widens opportunities for improved reflection in relation to

the core task. A benefit of reflective practice is a more sophisticated system of acknowledging and identifying problems (Leitch and Day, cited in James, 2007:34).

However, both Robbins and Alvy (2004:77) and Fullan (2000:583) caution principals and leaders of schools operating as a PLC. They warn them that teachers need to experience the benefits of working collaboratively before they will buy in to the concept of promoting the PLC. Hargreaves (cited in Hayes *et al.*, 2006:198) warns of ‘contrived collegiality’ as collaboration where adherence to certain inflexible guidelines is enforced. Furthermore he states that if PLCs are built as a type of contrived collegiality, “*collaborative cultures run the risk of being hijacked by hierarchical systems of control*”.

THE ORIGIN OF THE TERM PLC

According to Hayes *et al.* (2006:184), the term ‘learning community’ was given status in the mid-1990s by Talbert and McLaughlin when they researched work on high-school teachers in the USA. During the 1990s, much of the emphasis was on the ‘professional community’. However, Stoll and Louis (2007:2) point out that more recently the term ‘learning’ was included to indicate that there is a move away from concentrating on procedure to a focus on improvement. The findings of Talbert and McLaughlin’s (2001) study of professional communities indicated that creating strong professional communities with high expectations of the learning community might be important for improving the standard of education (cited in Christie *et al.*, 2007:31-32).

The separate components of a PLC are coherently described by DuFour and Eaker (1998):

A “professional” is someone with expertise in a specialized field, an individual who not only pursued advanced training to enter the field, but who is also expected to remain current in its evolving knowledge base (p xi). “Learning” suggests ongoing action and perpetual curiosity (p xii). The term “community” suggests a group linked by common interests (p xii).

A PLC contains the following elements: teachers who are equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills to teach effectively, remain life-long learners and are individuals in a community who work collaboratively by maintaining a shared focus on improved teaching and learning.

THE PLC IN CONTEXT

The approach to leadership that is needed for the creation of a PLC involves the activities of leaders where leadership is distributed, in interaction with others in certain contexts, focused around specific tasks. Spillane *et al.*, (2004) advocate such a style in leadership. Spillane and his colleagues are of the opinion that distributing the leadership amongst the teachers at the school may be the best way to develop leadership expertise. According to them, successful distribution of leadership to other role players could involve the interaction of positional leaders with other leaders as well as followers. In their opinion, followers are crucial to the success of a leadership activity (Spillane *et al.*, 2004:19). However, Louis, Kruse and Marks state that, even when the principal distributes leadership and no longer acts autonomously, he should still play a crucial role at the school in:

dealing with conflict, negotiating structural changes to support learning, working with others on vision building, creating networks, negotiating boundaries, aligning tasks and ensuring that accountabilities are addressed, together with ongoing organizational and management work to support teaching and learning (cited in Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006:201).

Hayes *et al.* (2006) endorse the sentiments expressed in the recent literature (Slater, 2008; Stoll and Louis, 2007; James, 2007; Spillane, 2006; Robbins and Alvy, 2004) that leadership should not be restricted to the principal alone:

Ideally, schools ... should be well managed in unobtrusive ways that support their central purposes and the substantive work of teachers and students ... they should disperse leadership as much as possible, and delegate management appropriately with adequate support and accountability (Hayes et al., 2006:200).

ENSURING THAT STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE

Creating a collaborative environment is crucial to creating a learning community (DuFour and Eaker, 1998:130) and could include the need for change. Sagor and Barnett (1994) caution that it is not realistic to think that a PLC can be created immediately nor can it be approached in isolation. Morgan highlights that re-culturing involves

a challenge of transforming mind-sets, visions, paradigms, images, metaphors, beliefs, and shared meanings that sustain existing ... realities ... It is about inventing what amounts to a new way of life (cited in Stoll, 1999:26).

Fullan (1993:3) supports this viewpoint of Morgan when he states that change in educational matters requires a “*fundamental shift in mind.*” DuFour and Eaker (1998:133) alert one to the challenge of re-culturing schools and changing the mind-set of individuals, “*Altering beliefs, expectations, and habits that have gone largely unexamined for many years is a complex, messy, and challenging task.*” Leaders run the risk of jeopardising the effectiveness of the PLC if poor practices are merely consolidated (Christie *et al.*, 2007:40). Furthermore, change is often prevented by “*the successful execution of tasks designed to preserve the status quo*” (Spillane *et al.*, 2004:12). However, if re-culturing schools is seen as a separate endeavour it will never succeed. Stoll and Louis suggest that

to reculture our schools, change cannot be separate and fragmented, but must be collaborative and embedded within the daily work to address the needs of students (2007:130).

For a PLC to succeed, teachers must change their mind-set and be prepared to accept new theories and practices differing from those to which they have been accustomed (DuFour and Eaker, 1998:20). DuFour and Eaker (1998:55) caution that leaders must also be aware of possible resistance and turmoil in the initial stages of the change process. Leaders and teachers must ensure that trust pervades the activities at school, enabling traditional protective behaviours to be cast aside so that alternative approaches may be cultivated (Stoll and Louis, 2007:94). Additionally, Slater (2008:56) alerts us to the fact that it is an

enormous challenge for leaders to develop a culture “*that unleashes the creativity and energy of people that supports their natural desire to make a contribution, and that motivates them to want to contribute.*” Due to the general conservative make-up of education systems, people are reluctant to effect immediate change. However, Fullan (1993:67) points out that emphasising restructuring prior to re-culturing puts the cart before the horse.

Stoll and Louis (2007) repeatedly refer to the PLC as a sustainable concept. Sustainability is only viable if leaders “*create structures for building and fulfilling obligations around issues vital to instructional improvement*” (Stoll and Louis, 2007:94). Jacklin (2007) comments that sustained effective leadership develops its own momentum, partly by being built into the system (cited in Christie *et al.*, 2007:112). However, Fullan (1993:49) points out that changing formal structures alone does not imply that norms, habits, skills and beliefs will automatically be changed. Various writers (DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Cox and deFrees, 1991) are of the opinion that restructuring is not an isolated activity. Collaborative team learning, in the opinion of DuFour and Eaker (1998:27), focuses on organizational renewal and a willingness to work together in continuous improvement processes. Additionally, Cox and deFrees (1991) discovered in their study of schools participating in a restructuring program, that restructuring is simultaneous and interactive instead of consisting of a limited set of steps (cited in Fullan, 1993:61).

In the opinion of Hayes *et al.* (2006:190), management must ensure that the school day is structured to include time for professional exchanges. Hayes *et al.* (2006:195) suggest that building habituated practices of learning into the school day would of necessity foster the growth of a sustainable PLC. Goldring and Rallis are of the opinion that creating opportunities for shared planning helps leaders build norms of collaboration within the school (cited in Spillane *et al.*, 2004:14). Hayes *et al.* (2006:195) state that structures need to be in place to ensure that opportunities are provided to build shared understandings, and to develop joint competence for tackling problems and learning from experience.

A CULTURE OF MUTUAL CARE, RESPECT AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

The idea of a school operating as a PLC reminds one of an old wise saying, *“It takes a village to raise a child”* (Robbins and Alvy, 2004:84). The school should be viewed as a *“community of commitment”* (DuFour and Eaker, 1998:15). According to Stoll and Louis (2007:32), collective responsibility augments the desire for teachers to accept responsibility for all the learners in the school. Furthermore, Stoll and Louis (2007:34) explain, *“By harnessing collective talents ... a principal can garner tremendous support in the quest to ensure that no child is left behind on the learning journey.”* In the opinion of Frankl (cited in DuFour and Eaker, 1998:281),

The desire to make a difference in the lives of their students is the single most powerful factor that attracts people to the teaching profession ... the professional learning community sets out to restore that belief by creating a community of caring and mutual concern.

According to Stoll and Louis (2007:185), sustainable PLCs *“preserve, protect and promote achievement and success in deep and broad learning for all, in relationships of care for others.”* In their report on schools in Maine, Cox and deFrees (1991) reported one of the common ingredients for restructuring involved conversations of both adults and students about what constitutes learning, and then working together to ensure that it happens (cited in Fullan, 1993:61). Stoll and Louis warn,

People must be able to disclose their assumptions and viewpoints openly, without fear of sanctions and retribution. Thus, the development of a positive school culture is imperative (2007:130).

Stoll and Louis (2007:192) emphasise that sustainable PLCs continue to prosper the most when they are connected to other schools around them, in networked learning communities. In the research of Christie *et al.* (2007:105), the effective schools were found to possess teachers who not only shared their expertise within the school, but across schools also.

Additionally, not only did they give professional assistance, they accepted it as well. James (2007:33) had an identical finding in his study of the nature of primary schools in disadvantaged areas in Wales. Christie and colleagues (2007) also discovered that there was a direct correlation between high levels of learner achievement and staff members eager to offer and receive help. The Productive Pedagogies Research, as described by Hayes *et al.* (2006:187), used the concept of a professional community to stress the direct correlation between sustained professional contact amongst teachers and the existence of a culture of shared responsibility for student learning.

In their research on whole school curriculum development, Nias and her colleagues (1992) found that one of the four key conditions that facilitated development was the valuing of three different things, namely, valuing the open expression of professional differences, valuing individuals through mutual consideration, and valuing a willingness to compromise (cited in Fullan, 1993:65). According to Stoll and Louis (2007:32), in cases where differences arise, the parties concerned “*assume good intentions and protect the dignity and self-respect of the other.*” Furthermore, DuFour and Eaker (1998:189) explain that, after in-depth discussion and debate the principal who advocates collaboration will ensure that, once consensus has been reached, “*everyone, including those who oppose it, act in alignment with it.*”

Consensus is viewed somewhat differently by Fullan (1993). He states that collaboration does not, of necessity, imply consensus (Fullan, 1993). Schrage (cited in Fullan, 1993:82) clarifies the frequently misunderstood concept of collaboration as follows:

One of the most persistent myths about collaboration is that it requires consensus. This is emphatically not so. Collaborators constantly bicker and argue. For the most part, these arguments are depersonalized and focus on genuine areas of disagreement.

Hargreaves (1999) shares the sentiment of Fullan when he says:

Homogeneity is not always a sign of strength. Elements of dissent and ambiguity within a culture are potentially healthy, particularly when (as is generally true today) schools need to be highly adaptable if they are to prosper in a turbulent environment (p57-58).

In collaborative activities, non-judgmental listening is crucial to the process of optimal teaching and learning (Robbins and Alvy, 2004:75). When a minority group of teachers are not in agreement with decisions, the collaborative principal will not dwell on it but rather “focus on advancing the cause” DuFour and Eaker (1998:189). Consequently, Robbins and Alvy (2004:76) believe that the presence of trust among colleagues has a dramatic impact on collaborative venture.

COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Nias and her colleagues observed in their research that teachers and principals viewed professional learning as crucial to the development of the curriculum and the fundamental element in improving the quality of children’s education (cited in Fullan, 1993:63). Furthermore, Fullan (1993:81) asserts that teachers must develop habits and skills of incessant inquiry and learning, both individually and collectively, inside and outside their own locale. The well-known adage, ‘Learners are learning when teachers are learning’ explains a benefit of Fullan’s assertion.

According to DuFour and Eaker (1998:27), people who engage in collaborative team learning are able to learn from one another, thus creating momentum to fuel continued improvement. Stoll and Louis (2007:33) state that collaborative teaching and learning stretches the professional repertoire beyond habitual practice. Hayes *et al.* (2006), as well as DuFour and Eaker (1998), suggest that exposure to a diverse repertoire of approaches benefits teachers caught up in the egg-crate syndrome. Essential to the professional community, according to Louis, Marks and Kruse is collaboration to foster sharing of expertise, and reflective dialogue (cited in Hayes *et al.*, 2006:186).

Various writers (James, 2007; Stoll and Louis, 2007; Hayes *et al.*, 2006; Robbins and Alvy, 2004; DuFour and Eaker, 1998) agree that social interaction will not benefit the PLC unless it contains substantive dialogue. In the opinion of Robbins and Alvy (2004:75), a PLC contains dialogue characterized by mutual respect, alive with stories about teaching and learning. Stoll and Louis explain that

each moment is seen as a teaching moment, and all members of the school community (including students) are encouraged to think about what they are teaching and what others might be learning from their actions and speech (2007:34).

Substantive professional conversations within schools must include a focus on pedagogy (Hayes *et al.*, 2006:81). They also state that “*maintaining a focus on learning as the central purpose of the organisation is a way of ensuring that its substantive work is attended to*” (p195). Fullan (1993:51) claims that participation in decision-making must be centred on the core of curriculum and instruction for change to occur. Christie and Lingard (2000) are of the belief that efficient leaders keep the staff and students goal-directed. In Marneweck’s 2002 study of post-apartheid rural schools, she found that, although teachers were involved in reflective dialogue during social interaction, only facts and curriculum matters were discussed, and not teaching skills, resulting in “*poor classroom practice*” (cited in Hayes *et al.*, 2006:188).

CONCLUSION

Although collaboration and the success of a PLC has to do with the concept of buy-in and possible re-culturing and restructuring, the principal and the rest of management still remain the driving forces when it comes to the ‘behind the scenes’ work. As Sagor and Barnett (1994:140) emphasise, good collaborative leaders “*must constantly celebrate successes, no matter how minor, and keep vigil over the vision or direction of the school.*” Senge (cited in Fullan, 1993:71) states that, as leaders learn to listen attentively to visions of others, they see that their vision is but a part of something bigger, and their sense of responsibility for the vision intensifies. The development of a sustainable PLC, where leadership is spread and where collaboration results in numerous benefits to both the teachers and learners, remains

central to the school becoming one where quality education is achieved and a high standard of student attainment exists. Furthermore, it enables the staff to tackle new projects confidently. It also ensures that they acclimatize to change with negligible stress and uncertainty. The characteristics of schools consistently improving upon results are reported by O'Neill and Conzemius (cited in Robbins and Alvy) to be:

those whose cultures are permeated by a shared focus, reflective practice, collaboration and partnerships, and an ever increasing leadership capacity characterized by individuals who focus on student learning, reflect on student assessments and learn as a collaborative team (2004:75).

The literature reviewed here suggests that dispersing leadership and enabling teachers to work collaboratively with a focus on the core task of teaching and learning optimises creative work and increases the chances of improving learner attainment through collective responsibility, productive dialogue, and shared expertise. Simultaneously, it generates a positive school culture conducive to ongoing, progressive teaching and learning. However, it is equally apparent that one of the challenges for leaders is to ensure that structures remain in place and that re-culturing is successful. Then only will the development of a sustainable PLC ensure that the ongoing relationship of teacher learning and student learning be generated and maintained through collaborative learning.

In summary, Stoll and Louis explain that

focus is not just on individual teachers' learning but on (1) professional learning; (2) within the context of a cohesive group; (3) that focuses on collective knowledge, and (4) occurs within an ethic of interpersonal caring that permeates the life of teachers, students and school leaders (2007:3).

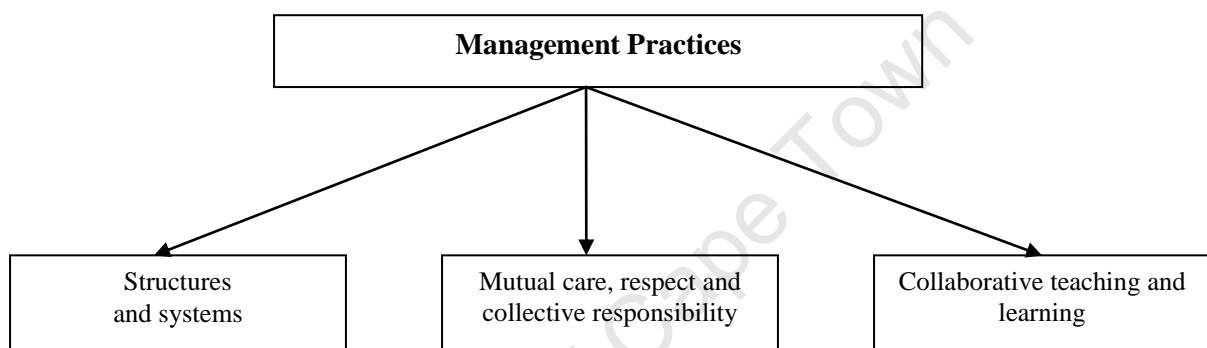
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework outlined here identifies the important characteristics of a PLC that were suggested in the literature review. These key concepts will be used to guide the study.

From the literature review, the following characteristics were seen to be crucial to the development of a PLC: ensuring that structures and systems are in place, the presence of mutual care and respect, and collaborative teaching and learning. These critical qualities are seen to impact on the development of a PLC.

Diagrammatically, the conceptual framework can be illustrated as follows:

Figure 1 Conceptual framework



What emerges from the literature review is that the management practices determine the extent to which a PLC is developed at a school. However, not all schools operate as PLCs. So the purpose of this study is to examine the three categories of practices identified here with regard to the degree to which they do or do not nurture a PLC.

The literature suggests that, in those schools where management practices do nurture PLCs: (1) platforms are created for professional exchanges. Creating a collaborative environment requires, at times, making changes to existing structures as well as revisiting the way in which systems function; (2) a culture of mutual care, respect and collective responsibility is fostered. Non-judgmental listening is crucial to ensure that the term 'community' becomes a reality. During decision-making, management has to ensure that everybody agrees to support the majority decision irrespective of their individual opinion; (3) collaborative professional learning occurs. This is essential for teachers to learn from both each other and outsiders. Professional conversations must be focused on pedagogy and curriculum. The aim is to increase their professional repertoire to improve learner achievement.

This conceptual framework provides the basis for establishing whether management practices relate to the development of an ideal PLC. The following chapter describes the method employed to accomplish the case study where the management practices at the two schools will be analysed.

University Of Cape Town

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter describes the approach to the research design, which is that of a case study, and explains the rationale for the case study approach in relation to the purpose of comparing two schools with similar socio-economic backgrounds but differing standardised test results. The comparison focuses on the impact of the management practices on the development of a PLC. The chapter goes on to discuss the case selection, data collection, transcriptions, data analysis, validity, and research ethics. The last section in this chapter relates to limitations of the study.

CASE STUDY APPROACH

I chose a comparative case study approach because this approach lends itself to an in-depth comparative analysis of two similar situations. In this instance, the data are collected mainly by using semi-formal open-ended interview questions. Leedy explains a case study as

a type of descriptive research in which data are gathered directly from individuals (individual cases) or social or community groups in their natural environment for the purpose of studying interactions, attitudes, or characteristics of individuals or groups (1993:123).

CASE SELECTION

The schools, for the purpose of the case study, had to be similar particularly with regard to the socio-economic background of the learners. With the assistance and approval of the research department of the WCED, I set out to find two primary schools, preferably in the same education district, from the same quintile⁴, and from the same previous education department. Furthermore, both schools had to be classified, in terms of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, as either Section 20 schools (managed by the department) or as Section 21 schools (self-managing). Finally, the schools had to have considerably differing results for the most recent Grade 6 LitNum testing.

⁴ Schools in South Africa are divided into five quintile groups according to the financial condition of the school community, with quintile one representing the poorest of schools and quintile five the wealthiest.

We could not find two primary schools in the same education district filling the above requirements, so two schools were chosen from different education districts. The two schools selected were Meadowlands Primary and Colworth Primary⁵. Colworth Primary achieved significantly higher results⁶ than did Meadowlands Primary in the Grade 6 LitNum testing, as reflected in Table 1. Both are quintile 5 schools. The quintile 5 category includes such a broad range of schools that this is not very informative about the socio-economic context. As will be shown in Table 3, most learners at both schools come from homes where parents are skilled, with the majority of parents being artisans such as plumbers, cabinet makers and electricians (see Appendix 4).

Table 1A WCED systemic tests: Literacy results at the two schools 2002 - 2009

	Grade 3				Grade 6			
<i>Year</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2009</i>
Meadowlands	33%	55%	64%	63%	33%	70%	76%	63%
Colworth	55%	46%	89%	82%	55%	90%	83%	86%
Provincial	36%	40%	48%	54%	35%	42%	45%	49%

Table 1B WCED systemic tests: Numeracy results at the two schools 2002 - 2009

	Grade 3				Grade 6			
<i>Year</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2009</i>
Meadowlands	48%	65%	37%	31%	3%	15%	16%	31%
Colworth	65%	51%	61%	75%	33%	58%	40%	49%
Provincial	37%	37%	31%	35%	16%	17%	14%	17%

Tables 1A and 1B indicate that results have fluctuated at Meadowlands, but have generally improved over time. The improvement in Literacy at Meadowlands from 2004 - 2007 was attributed, by one respondent, to the Literacy Half-Hour Reading Programme that was implemented in 2001. Although the programme did not produce good results in the first round of LitNum testing, there was a significant improvement in the school reading levels by

⁵ These are both pseudonyms.

⁶ The results indicate the average percentage of learners who obtained a pass (more than 50%) for the test.

the end of 2002. The programme was amended in 2003 and was implemented until 2006. A new reading programme was introduced in 2006 but sustained only until 2007. No formal programmes have been in place since 2007.

The only area not to improve at Meadowlands Primary is grade 3 numeracy, where the results dropped by 17% from 2002 to 2008. This drop is associated with instability of the teaching staff in the Foundation Phase in recent years, particularly in grade 3. There was also a lack of shared responsibility in the phase for the Grade 3 LitNum testing. The only area where there was an improvement upon the results of the previous test at Meadowlands was in grade 6 numeracy. The consistent improvement in grade 6 numeracy is associated with the decision by management to place an experienced Mathematics teacher in three of the four grade 6 classes. This teacher, the head of the Mathematics department at the school, was instrumental in ensuring that teachers were focused on improving their teaching and assessment strategies in Mathematics.

Tables 1A and 1B indicate that Colworth Primary School produced results that were considerably better than those of Meadowlands. Although a fluctuation of results at Colworth is reflected in the tables, there was an improvement across the board. Generally, Colworth obtained good results in the 2009 LitNum systemic tests, with the exception of grade 6 Numeracy, which, although lower than Colworth's other results, was higher than Meadowlands' results and substantially higher than the provincial average percentage. The general improvement in results is associated with a whole-school intervention programme focusing on literacy and numeracy. The intervention programme was introduced in 2002. It initially appeared to be counterproductive as results deteriorated in 2004. The staff members, though disappointed, were even more determined to adapt practices to improve the results. Many initiatives, projects and programmes were implemented and sustained in an attempt to remedy the drop in results. Among the initiatives of the principal, was the decision to remove one of the Foundation Phase teachers as a class teacher and to utilise her as a reading teacher in the phase. Additionally, a parent, who had recently completed a course in the teaching of reading to children, approached the school to volunteer her services. She was employed the following year as a teacher assistant for reading in the InterSen Phase.

Generally, the staff at Colworth Primary saw these intervention practices as a whole-school project.

The LitNum test, in itself, does not provide a benchmark for the effectiveness of the management practices at either of the schools. However, it brings the prevailing culture of each school into consideration. Interestingly, both schools are held in high regard in their respective education districts, even the school with the substantially poorer LitNum results.

When I received official authorisation from the WCED to use the schools for my research, I approached the principals of Meadowlands Primary and Colworth Primary. After a brief information session with each principal, held independently of each other, they amicably committed themselves and their schools to participate in the research.

CONTEXT OF SCHOOLS

I describe features of the two schools with regard to teachers, learners and parents in the section below.

Table 2 **Teacher numbers and learner-teacher ratios**

Schools	Staff establishment		No. of learners		learner- teacher ratio
	<i>2004</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>Jan. 2006</i>	<i>Dec. 2009</i>	
Meadowlands	31	31	1 170	1 189	42:1
Colworth	17	20	679	826	36:1

Table 2 indicates that Colworth Primary is the smaller school with the bigger increase in both enrolment and staff establishment over the last few years, and a lower learner-teacher ratio.

Table 3 Age, gender and qualifications of teachers

Schools	Over 40yrs	Gender		Academic qualifications	
		Males	Females	Degree	Honours
Meadowlands	76%	21.2%	78.8%	23%	13%
Colworth	61%	30.4%	69.6%	26%	4%

Table 3 illustrates that both schools have more female than male teachers, and that the majority of the teachers at both schools are over the age of 40. Generally, Meadowlands has more teachers with higher qualifications than does Colworth.

Table 4 Job descriptions of parents

Categories	Skilled	Semi-skilled	Management	Miscellaneous
Meadowlands	41%	35%	13%	5%
Colworth	47%	34%	14%	19%

Table 4 indicates a summary of the categories of the parents' jobs at both schools. This table indicates that the learners at both schools come from similar socio-economic backgrounds (see Appendix 4 for a more detailed description). This data is based on a survey conducted with two class groups at each school. The learners described the jobs of their parents on the survey forms that I provided and I then categorised the job descriptions. The most common category of employment of the parents at both schools was that of an artisan. The results of the survey indicate that 32% and 30% of the parents of learners in these classes at Meadowlands and Colworth, respectively, were artisans.

Meadowlands Primary

Meadowlands Primary School, established in 1990, reminded me of a private hospital when I first saw it. The school was housed in a beautiful, modern, well-maintained building, with a hall that was built as part of the school. Furthermore, it had a spacious parking area, a well-tended garden and an immaculate property. The surrounding residential area appeared to comprise a combination of middle class and working class homes. The school community, according to the principal, was regarded as middle class. The recovery rate for the R480.00

school fees was 64% of the 85% who were not exempt⁷ from paying fees, that is, 54% of the total number of learners paid their school fees.

The principal was in his late 50s at the time the data was collected, and was the second principal of the school. The majority of the teachers, a total of 76%, were over the age of 40, with 79% of the staff being female. The school had a relatively high staff turnover, with a total of 26% new teachers having joined the staff in the last five years. The school, located in an area established 25 years ago, had a low growth of 2% of new learners in the last four years. Although the school had two governing body posts, the learner-teacher ratio is slightly higher than at Colworth Primary. A total of 75% of the SMT were not class teachers. All the teachers had the minimum qualification requirement with 23% having a degree and 13% having acquired an Honours Degree. Meadowlands Primary had additional rooms that they utilise at their school as support rooms, besides the twenty eight classrooms, namely, one media room, two computer labs, one remedial room, and one counselling room. This indicated that physical structures were present to facilitate improved teaching and learning.

Colworth Primary

Colworth Primary School, established in 1962, brought to mind a traditional community school when I first saw it. The building was ordinary-looking and neat but in need of maintenance. The parking lot seemed crammed with cars, the garden practically non-existent except for a tiny patch of lawn in front of the school building, and the property appeared to be clean but not breath-taking. A beautiful school hall had been built after meticulous planning and team work. The surrounding residential area appeared to comprise middle class homes. The recovery rate for the R1 750 school fees was 64% of the 85% who were not exempt from paying fees, exactly the same as that of Meadowlands Primary School (that is, 54% of the total number of learners paid their school fees). Although the school fees were much higher at Colworth than at Meadowlands, the spread of jobs of the parents did not indicate, generally, that the learners came from better homes. Bearing in mind the way that

⁷ In South Africa, parents who earn a combined annual gross income of less than 10% of the school fees are exempt from paying school fees. In addition, the following children are exempted, children who: are in foster care, are living at a youth care centre, are living at a place of safety, orphans, have been abandoned by parents, are without any visible means of support, head a household, live with an adult who receives a grant on behalf of the child.

the school fees system works in South Africa⁸, it is noteworthy that parents of a similar socio-economic background had agreed to a relatively high fee, as compared to Meadowlands Primary School, and that the proportion of parents who did actually pay is the same as that at Meadowlands. Parents who were not in the position to pay the fees at Colworth Primary were offered the opportunity to come and work at the school to pay off their child's school fees.

The principal of Colworth Primary was in his late 40s at the time the data was collected, and was the fourth principal at the school since the school was established in 1962. The majority of the teachers, a total of 61%, were over the age of 40, with 70% of the staff being female. The school had a slightly lower staff turnover than did Meadowlands, with a total of 22% new teachers joining the staff in the last five years. The school, although located in an area established approximately 100 years ago, had shown more growth than Meadowlands, having had an increase in learner enrolment of 18% in the last four years. Although the school had only three governing body posts, one more than Meadowlands, the learner-teacher ratio was slightly lower across the school. This is a result of management using the human resources optimally: only 25% of the SMT were not class teachers. All teachers had the minimum qualification requirement with 26% of teachers having a degree and 4% having acquired an Honours Degree. Colworth Primary had additional rooms that were utilised as support rooms, besides the twenty three classrooms, namely, one library reading room, two computer labs, and one remedial room. This suggested that physical structures were available to facilitate improved teaching and learning, as was the case at Meadowlands.

Concluding comment

In general, the schools were very similar with regard to the profile of teachers and learners and available resources.

⁸ Management has to persuade parents to approve the school fees suggested by the school.

DATA COLLECTION

The interview questions

I decided to use the interview as a data collecting strategy as I felt it would be the best way to gather detailed data to assess the impact of management practices on the development of a PLC. The explanation of Cohen *et al.*, describes the benefits of using interviews above other data collection strategies:

Interviews enable participants - be they interviewers or interviewees - to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In these senses the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable (2007:349).

My interviews were recorded as I felt that this would minimise the chances of my misrepresenting the responses. I thought it would also improve the probability of recapturing the mood, nuances and non-verbal messages otherwise easily forgotten. Semi-formal open-ended questions, as indicated in Appendix 1, were used to collect the data. This type of questioning allowed me to use probing questions when required. According to Cohen, *et al.*,

The interview is a flexible tool for data collecting, enabling multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard. The order of the interview may be controlled while still giving space for spontaneity, and the interviewer can press not only for complete answers but also for responses about complex and deep issues (2007:349).

I drafted the questions on the basis of the conceptual framework in Chapter 2 which was, in turn, derived from a review of the relevant theoretical work. After compiling a list of questions, I grouped them according to topics that were identified as crucial to the development of a PLC and collaborative work. Consequently, the interviews covered three themes, namely, management and leadership, teaching, and teacher development (see Appendix 1).

These three themes were identified from the literature as important ingredients for the development of a PLC and valid components to consider when investigating the impact of teaching on learner achievement. I hoped to ascertain the following under the three different topics:

1. Management and leadership: whether the SMT was functioning effectively and whether there was enactment on and adherence to planning and policies; whether structures and systems support teaching and learning; whether there are platforms for addressing and resolving problems, and inclusive decision-making.
2. Teaching: whether collaborative work is observed amongst teachers, especially with regard to lesson planning, and whether the SMT monitored and supported teaching and learning.
3. Teacher development: whether the SMT ensures that regular development occurs with the aim of improving the self-esteem and skills of teachers.

After drafting the questions, I had to decide who to interview and which questions to pose to each of the different participants. I decided to interview teachers across the four post levels (see Table 5). The post-level-one (PL 1) teachers were not interviewed for all the questions under leadership and management, as I felt that they would not always be in a position to comment on certain aspects of the management of schools. I did, however, include questions for teachers who were not part of the SMT that enabled me to focus on the daily interaction of teachers with each other across the different PLs, in discussions and interaction (see Appendix 1).

Selection of respondents

Table 5 **Respondent selection for each school**

Foundation Phase		InterSen Phase		Top Management	
PL 1 (teacher)	PL 2 (HOD)	PL 1 (teacher)	PL 2 (HOD)	PL 3 (Deputy)	PL 4 (Principal)
1	1	1	1	1	1

I interviewed a total of six teachers at each school. The selection of participants at both schools was done by PL (see Table 5). Teachers at all four PLs were interviewed because collaborative work and the development of a PLC involve all teachers at all four levels working as a team. Where more than one teacher filled a position, the teacher most willing to participate was chosen. I collected the data from the teachers within phases and across the various PLs at each school. For the purposes of this research, PL 1 represents the entry level teacher with no formal position in management; PL 2 represents the head of department (HOD); PL 3 represents the deputy principal; while PL 4 represents the principal. Teachers at all four PLs were included in the interview. (The combined Intermediate and Senior Phase is known as the InterSen Phase in this discourse.)

The interviews

Pilot test

Before interviewing the teachers at the two schools, I ran a pilot test on two teachers not attached to either of the case studies. I prepared a typed list of the questions I was going to ask each participant. In each instance, they were given a few minutes to glance at the list of interview questions before the commencement of the interview. Various impromptu probing questions were also used, depending on the particular responses of the participants. I learnt quite a bit through the pilot test. The test run not only enabled me to familiarise myself with the use of the digital voice recorder, it also helped me determine the sensitivity of the recording. Additionally, the pilot test allowed me the opportunity to practise my probing skills. Consequently, the questions were reviewed and certain of them adapted to make the interview more user-friendly. The phrasing of certain questions was changed and certain terminology was revised.

Recording strategy

I chose to record the interviews for a number of reasons. Firstly, I wanted to be able to listen attentively to the teacher without having to be distracted, or distract them, by writing all the time. Secondly, the accuracy of the transcription would be improved. Thirdly, the interview would be readily available for authenticating what has been said. Informal conversations with both principals were also taken into account, in that they provided contextual information and helped me to interpret what was said in the interviews.

Meadowlands Primary School

I interviewed the participants at Meadowlands Primary first. The interviews took place over a period of two weeks. The average duration per recorded interview was 1 hour 25 minutes. Although the principal was very accommodating and granted me permission to interview the teachers, he left me to my own devices to make all the necessary arrangements. Interviews were executed during the school vacation, at the residence of each participant.

Colworth Primary School

My interviews with the participants at Colworth Primary, with the exception of the principal who had been interviewed two days prior to the rest of the staff, were conducted within a period of one day. The interviews were more concise and business-like. An average of 48 minutes was spent per interview. The principal was reluctant to allow me access to the teachers after contact time. Consequently, he arranged for a supervisor to be at school on the day of my interview to relieve each staff member during their interview session.

The survey

I handed out two different survey forms to the staff at each school, one for the staff and one for the principal. The forms are included in Appendices 2 and 3. These generated additional data relating to the context such as teacher numbers and qualifications.

TRANSCRIPTIONS

Strategy

I typed out the full interview of each participant separately. Thereafter, I analysed the responses to the same questions from all the participants of, firstly, Meadowlands Primary and then Colworth Primary under the same questions, one question at a time. I anticipated that this method of grouping the responses would make much easier reading for me when I eventually did the data analysis. This proved to be true.

Duration

The transcription of the recorded interviews of Meadowlands Primary took approximately five weeks to complete while it took slightly more than two weeks to complete the interviews at Colworth Primary. This difference was not so much a consequence of the length of the transcripts as of the emotional tone. I found it easier and less uncomfortable to transcribe the Colworth transcripts. This difference in tone will be addressed in the analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

There are many different approaches to data analysis. Bogdan and Biklen describe it as follows,

Analysis involves working with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, synthesizing them, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what has to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others (1992:153).

Similarly, Cohen *et al.* state, from a more interpretivist perspective:

Qualitative data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities (2007:461).

These two definitions convey my approach to analysing the data that was captured during my interviews at Meadowlands and Colworth. Initially the interview questions were grouped according to three practice domains. I systematically sorted the transcribed, typed data of all the interviewees into these domains. I grouped all the responses of the teachers from Meadowlands Primary School together under the same questions. I did this question by question. Then I did the same with all the responses from the teachers at Colworth Primary School. Thorough scrutiny of the data revealed a pattern in the responses and, consequently, six different themes emerged, as reflected in Table 6.

Table 6 Framework for data collection

(The number of questions asked under each topic is reflected within brackets.)

Topics	Practice domains		
	Management and Leadership (10)	Teaching (5)	Teacher Development (3)
Structures and systems	✓	✓	✓
Planning	✓	✓	✓
Accountability	✓	✓	-
Recognition	✓	✓	-
Morale	✓	✓	✓
Orientation to learning	-	✓	-

When it came to reporting the data it proved to be unwieldy to do so under the topics indicated in Table 6 as this organisation led to considerable repetition. I therefore regrouped the topics for the purpose of reporting the analysis. The organisation of reporting of the data will be described in the next chapter, and specifically in Table 7.

VALIDITY

I followed the guidelines of Wolcott (1994) in ensuring that my findings were valid. Wolcott suggests the following nine points to assist with responding to the embedded challenge of validity: talk little, listen a lot; record accurately; begin writing early; let readers ‘see’ for themselves; report fully; be candid; seek feedback; try to achieve balance; and, write accurately.

However, after having read Maxwell (2005) I realised that the greatest threat to validity in my study was researcher bias, as I was familiar with the setting at Meadowlands Primary and could possibly interpret the responses through a tainted lens. Additionally, I was concerned about the potential loyalty to the institution of the teachers at Meadowlands. Being the school with the poorer achievement, they could have been tempted not to divulge any inappropriate practices prevalent at the school. This could result in a possible distortion of findings. My concern proved to be unfounded, as the participants from Meadowlands Primary were exceptionally candid in their responses and I was able to carefully compare the responses of both sets of teachers for my case study.

RESEARCH ETHICS

Permission to research the management and leadership practices at the two primary schools was requested and granted by both the WCED as well as the principals of the two participating schools. Convenient times were arranged with the principals to discuss my research project. Thereafter relevant arrangements concerning the day and time of each interview were made with the interviewees. I conducted my research within the parameters relating to the ethical procedures as set out by UCT where I followed certain procedures which involved submitting the details of my proposal research to the Research Department of the WCED.

I had a responsibility towards the school communities being researched *“not to jeopardize the reputation of the research community ... or spoil the opportunities for further research”* and instead protect their well-being, reputation, and the anonymity and confidentiality of sponsors if so agreed (Cohen *et al.*, 2007:75). I explained the responsibility that I promised to undertake during my research to each participant before I conducted each interview. This proved quite challenging to me during the analysis of the data. As a means of upholding my promise, I consequently chose not to use complete quotations of teachers in order to not only protect their well-being but also to protect the reputation of certain individuals who were in crucial management positions. I used pseudonyms to protect the identity of the schools. Fictitious names were used in quotes where the interviewees identified people, events or organisations by name. At times I chose to even refrain from identifying the position of the

respondent in the management structure in order to further disguise the identity of those who had serious grievances.

LIMITATIONS TO STUDY

A limitation is that, although the interviews were in-depth and revealed a great deal about the culture of the school, I was unable to spend more time in the schools, observing other activities. Additionally, only six teachers were interviewed at each school. My data would have been much richer had I interviewed more teachers in each phase. However, due to the scope of the research and the time constraints, not only with the interviews but with the transcriptions as well, I had no alternative but to be satisfied with the number of interviewees. Despite these limitations, sufficient in-depth data was gathered to accurately reflect the management practices at both schools.

The next chapter will present the analysis of the data which was collected through the interviews and survey.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter the data is presented and analysed according to the framework presented in Table 7. I gathered all the data analysed in this chapter from the interviews and surveys conducted at the two selected schools. The conceptual framework reflected in Chapter 2, developed by reviewing literature pertinent to the development of a PLC, describes the characteristics of the ideal PLC. The framework presented in this chapter is used to generate a description of management practices in each of the two schools, regardless of whether these practices conform to the features of a PLC. Ultimately, the aim is to ascertain whether or not the management practices at the two schools promote the development of a PLC. After presenting the analytic framework in Table 7, I analyse the data of each school, firstly for Meadowlands Primary, and then for Colworth Primary. I decided to systematically discuss a complete case under each of the sub-themes reflected in Table 7, in order to give the reader a holistic overview of practices at each school.

ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

In this next section I identify whether systems and practices are in place to nurture the development of a PLC. I identify, specifically, whether they are evident for the following: generating policies and plans, addressing poor results, addressing problems and tensions, according recognition to teachers, sharing information, planning of lessons and school events, monitoring of lesson planning and resources, and support for professional teacher learning. Thereafter I describe the consequences of these practices for teacher collaboration and staff morale. The categories that I use are based on the characteristics described in the literature review in Chapter 2, described as important for the development of a PLC.

Table 7 Analytic framework

Systems and practices	Consequences
Generating policies and plans Addressing poor results Addressing problems and tensions According recognition to teachers Sharing information Planning of lessons and school events Monitoring of lesson planning and resources Support for professional teacher learning	Teacher collaboration Staff morale

CASE STUDY 1: MEADOWLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL

In this section I present the analysis of the interview transcriptions and the information collected in the survey. I identify the management practices and the consequences of these practices at Meadowlands Primary according to the themes identified in Table 7.

Systems and practices for the development of an optimal teaching and learning environment

In this section I look at whether systems and practices are evident for the following: generating policies and plans, addressing poor results, addressing problems and tensions, according recognition to teachers, sharing information, planning of lessons and school events, monitoring of lesson planning and resources, and support for professional teacher learning.

There was consensus among the respondents at Meadowlands that, generally, a uniform set of structures and systems was lacking at Meadowlands Primary and that the problems at the school were exacerbated by policies, systems and monitoring not being in place and, if in place, not being adhered to. The responses indicated, however, that there were differences between the Foundation Phase and InterSen Phase in this regard: management was more proactive and collaborative at the Foundation Phase level than at the intermediate and senior levels. The weakness of management systems was linked to the management style at the

school. The principal tended to operate unilaterally, as will be evidenced in quotations throughout this chapter. When questions were asked about the SMT or the School Development Team, responses often focused on the principal alone.

Systems for generating and reviewing policies and plans

The majority of teachers indicated that structures for drafting and workshopping policies and plans were lacking. The interviewees felt that policies did not guide the practices of the teachers as they had not been part of the process where the policies were first generated.

Generally the teachers felt that, although the School Improvement Plan (SIP) is an important plan for identifying and addressing problem areas, it is disregarded by the school. This they felt was mainly due to the fact that the plan was not drawn up by the whole School Development Team (SDT), as was required by WCED policy. An SDT member, who is also on the SMT, reported that, although the SDT is responsible for the SIP, the principal and one deputy drafted the document without reflecting all the viewpoints of the teachers. There was no opportunity for other members of the SDT to view or discuss the plan before it was sent to the relevant departmental official.

These sentiments are reflected in these quotes:

I haven't seen the SIP. I don't think the staff even discussed it. There's a document in place so, if the staff isn't even aware of what is written in that plan, how do you know when something is translated into action? (PL 1 teacher)

SIP ... we must have it, that's why we do it! I don't know what's in the plan (SMT member).

Another example of a tendency not to plan collaboratively was evident in the preparation for the teacher strike of 2007. There was confusion as to whether or not there was a plan, but, if there was, it was not known to all or implemented. As one SMT member put it: *"With the strike we had a plan of action. The SMT was supposed to run it but at the end of the day the*

onus was on the teachers.” The response of another SMT member indicated that there was no real plan for action regarding the teacher strike,

With the strike last year we were never called together last year and told, ‘Look here, our school is facing so many problems. So many people are striking. How can we cope? How can the school go on? How are we going to support the children and parents but still support those teachers who are on strike because they’re standing there for a purpose?’ So, it wasn’t dealt with by management.

Systems for addressing poor results and improving pedagogic practices

There was consensus amongst the teachers regarding the fact that poor results of individuals are addressed superficially, and that teaching practices are generally not adapted to address poor school results. The responses indicated that planning basically involved an attempt to cover the assessment standards as far as possible, not to address poor results. The majority of the SMT members felt that there was inadequate planning to address the situation regarding the poor class averages and the low LitNum results for the grade 3s and grade 6s. There were few opportunities for professional learning at Meadowlands Primary. The focus of the SMT and teachers was not on improving pedagogic practices, and teachers did not express concerns about the results. Where intervention did occur, they were aimed at changing the behaviour of individual learners rather than teachers’ practices. The opinions of the SMT members regarding addressing the poor results are reflected below:

[The poor results are]... not being seen as the school’s problem ... seen as bygones ... it’s not being dealt with.

I don’t think the teachers care about the results of the learners but they try to put in extra time. But with big classes they don’t have time to give individual attention. Teachers do contact parents to discuss the problem areas. It differs from teacher to teacher but there’s no plan in place for the school.

Nothing is being done about the poor results. It depends on the leader in the grade. Things are being said but it’s in the air.

Teachers weren't really interested in the LitNum results - maybe just the grade 3 and 6 teachers because their children were involved.

Systems for addressing problems and tensions

Some of the teachers felt that no trustworthy systems had been implemented for problem solving. For example, according to the majority of the teachers interviewed at Meadowlands, the system for addressing behavioural problems with learners was ineffective. As one of the PL 1 teachers said, *"Nothing gets done at the office. The children get spoken to, they come back laughing."* An SMT member stated, *"It's a holiday for them [learners] to go the office."* Another SMT member felt that the principal did not resolve problems satisfactorily when he addressed the parents without the class teacher being present,

The feeling I get is that the principal just pacifies the parent and doesn't solve the problem or deal with the problem in a serious and firm enough manner.

Another example is that of conflict between teachers. The interviewees felt that the system used by the principal regarding conflict resolution between the teachers was ineffective. An SMT member stated that she believed that the principal does not have the ability to resolve problems:

... four or five months down the line that thing comes up again because you've just put a plaster over the problem, nothing has been done about it. So, my feeling is that maybe he doesn't know how to deal with it. Maybe they don't know how to sort out the problem.

Another of the SMT members felt that there were times when big problems were not addressed,

Major or very serious offences and things that are coming up are just being swept under the mat and we will never talk about it again. We are told that we will talk about it again but we never do. The principal first gossips about the teachers in the corridors before sorting out the problems.

One of the SMT members indicated that the system used to address teacher absenteeism was also not effective:

Absenteeism, which is like a regular problem, is also not dealt with by management. It's dealt with by the principal. He complains every morning regularly in our Morning Blessing⁹. He subtly throws things about absenteeism, instead of ... everybody is not guilty of those things you are saying ... there are two or three people on your staff who are guilty that you know you need to call them in and say, 'I notice you're absent so many times.' So sometimes your style of generalizing is losing effect because it's falling on deaf ears.

Systems for the recognition of teachers' contributions

The literature suggests that according recognition to teachers contributes to the development of a healthy tone and that it is important to “*constantly celebrate successes, no matter how minor*” (Sagor and Barnett, 1994:140).

Responses of the teachers indicated that a formal system for according recognition to the contributions of teachers was lacking. The principal did acknowledge teachers efforts in an informal unsystematic way, on occasion. For example, he dismissed the staff earlier on certain days, at the time when learners went home, as a means of giving recognition for extra hours they may have put into a project. The staff members did not approve of this approach, as is indicated in the comment by the PL 1 teacher:

The early dismissals are not structured and planned. Prior notification should be given. It seems to be done to please individuals, or by request ... impulse. Most of the times the Grade 4s have meetings arranged and they stay after school to complete meetings and so they don't benefit and it actually causes conflict. It's all about planning!

⁹ The daily gathering time of ten minutes by the staff where a teacher delivers a word of encouragement to the rest of the staff, on a rotational basis, and where brief announcements are made.

One SMT member felt that the principal sometimes, instead of giving recognition to the hard work of teachers, disregarded their work. She explained, with reference to the induction policy for new teachers that was drafted by the Foundation Phase teachers,

We've sent it in the beginning of the year [five months prior to the interview] but are still waiting for it to be returned. I found the policy ... that I handed in to the office ... lying on the piano in the staffroom on Friday.

Generally, the SMT members felt frustrated and overlooked, as the principal did not always consult SMT members or allocate responsibilities to them. They felt that the principal had formed an alliance with non-SMT members and given them recognition and exposure by giving them responsibilities better suited to SMT members. This sense of exclusion had a gender dimension as the SMT members who felt excluded were women while the colleagues whom the principal chose to consult were men.

Systems for the sharing of information

The teachers generally felt that the structures and systems for sharing information needed to be improved. They felt that formal meetings are not frequent enough, nor carefully structured, resulting in minimal participation and an ineffective system for the sharing of information. Various teachers felt that platforms are not being created for: ensuring that crucial items were placed on the agenda prior to meetings taking place, exchanging ideas, discussing problems, reflecting on the daily activities, providing thorough feedback, and discussing teaching and learning.

One of the HODs in the InterSen Phase had a problem with the frequency of meetings:

Staff meetings are not held sufficiently enough. Grades certainly don't meet enough. Maybe they meet without their HOD - but sometimes they don't meet with their HOD - and discuss problems there and plan their work. The SMT has to meet more regularly, like twice a month. At the moment they meet once a term or as the problem arises.

According to the InterSen Phase teacher, many meetings appeared to be tackled off the cuff. She felt that meetings were not productive due to the agenda not being drawn up collectively, resulting in minimal participation of staff members:

I feel that staff meetings are not very productive because sometimes I think staff meetings are called but things are jotted down that morning - the things that must be discussed. It's not things that are recorded. If you find that, whoever runs the staff meeting, you should pick up things that are happening, things that are causing problems, you should record it that you can come back to it. I think at staff meetings it's always about things that must happen now. Or it's about dates that must be set or it's things that need to go in. I'm sure the SMT doesn't get together to say we're having a staff meeting on Friday. This is what I have to say, are there any ideas, any problems coming from your grade, from this one, from that one? So that we can see that we are all affected by it and that everybody's included. But it's like a one-man show.

The Foundation Phase teacher shared a similar sentiment about the types of things that were discussed. She agreed that platforms for discussion, at phase level in her instance, were not always productive nor were they well structured:

Foundation Phase meetings are always about admin or planning and staff meetings are always about events. Never about personal things like problems in class, or how you're dealing with certain things.

One of the SMT members felt that the system used for reporting back to the staff was inappropriate:

I don't agree with what happens ... report backs are done in the Morning Blessing where people start other people's day by bombarding teachers. This is often done by management and by LA [learning area] heads. I am aware that lots of changes are happening but the way it is related to the staff is wrong.

Making and implementing plans

In this section, practices impacting on planning for teaching in the class, as well as the planning for school events, are identified. I ascertain whether there is enactment on this planning and whether there is a system in place for the procurement and issuing of resources. Generally, the responses of the interviewees indicate that the systems used in the Foundation Phase, at Meadowlands Primary, are better than in the InterSen Phase. These systems include: planning and the implementation of the planning, and the procurement and distribution of resources. There was consensus by all the interviewees that the system used for the planning of school events needs to be improved upon.

Lesson planning

The responses indicated that the lesson planning in the Foundation Phase was more collaborative, more thorough and more strictly adhered to than in the InterSen Phase. The InterSen Phase teachers cited the following reasons for the lack of follow-through on their planning: insufficient contact time, too many interruptions (school functions, fundraising, departmental workshops and courses, athletics, the teacher strike) as well as personal problems and too many assessment standards.

The deputy offered an explanation for the planning being more strictly adhered to in the Foundation Phase,

In some phases it's like a set rule, when the learners leave they get together - the grade - and they discuss things of the day and for the next day. In the Foundation Phase I'd say it works like a bomb. They have that time every afternoon and that is why their planning is on track. In the Intermediate and Senior Phases there are too many interruptions ...

Planning for school events

Teachers felt that, although planning was reflected on the term planner, the school planning was haphazard and skimpy. There was consensus by the interviewees that both short and

long term planning was inadequate, and not enacted. This is reflected by the following comments of two PL 1 teachers:

I think that there is no vision at our school and it all boils down to management again. If you know what must be in for the year and you plan ahead, then teachers will see that their things are in order and in place ... but it's not happening! So that's why I think our staff meetings are not productive. Even with a plain general staff meeting with specific things that need to be discussed, it's not even planned ahead.

... there's nothing in place at the beginning of the year and this doesn't help to motivate teachers. For example, the prospectus¹⁰ was only received in the second term.

We don't set goals for the year although we do have a term planner on paper.

... we know that reading is a problem at our school and for the last two years they had plans set out for a competition in January. First year nothing took place ... second year they made promises again to parents. Up till now, halfway through the year, nothing has taken place.

In the opinion of one PL 1 teacher, the structures and systems in place for the planning of non-academic events needed to be addressed:

I think it would be better for the school if the dates [for fundraising] were spread over a greater time and I think it's also if your structures are in place where you manage your events properly. For example, even if you have someone in charge of just managing events for the school ...even with sport [athletics] also, that practice time that we have ... if a child really wants to participate in sport they will practice after school, if there is a teacher willing to. Why take the teaching time? So why do

¹⁰ The document containing the plans and information about the school for the year

you spoil the child now to practise in the morning session and in the morning session is when the child's brain is the freshest ...

Planning for the procurement of resources

The management of procurement of textbooks provides an example of the degree to which management practices support teaching and learning.

It was evident from the responses that there was a system in place for the Foundation Phase but not for Meadowlands as a school. Although the teachers in the Foundation Phase appeared satisfied that their demands for textbooks had been met, the InterSen Phase teachers appeared to be disgruntled about this matter. This is evident in these two responses:

For the Foundation Phase, there are sufficient resources. We can ask and we will receive if money is available for that. But they will always make a point of getting that for us. So there we can't complain (F Phase HOD).

In Geography for instance, they work from an English textbook but there's not an Afrikaans one for them. You ask someone to find out and they don't come back to you. So there's no progress. It all comes back to ... there's no one specific in charge! (InterSen teacher)

The responses of the PL 1 teachers indicated that there was a lack of shared knowledge regarding who is responsible for the procurement of resources: “*Mr Saul sees to it*” said one teacher, while another responded, “*Sometimes Mr Saul, sometimes Petersen, sometimes someone else.*”

Monitoring of lesson planning and resources

Lesson planning

The respondents at Meadowlands Primary indicated that monitoring was more thoroughly adhered to in the Foundation Phase than the InterSen Phase. Monitoring appeared to be minimal in the InterSen Phase. Foundation Phase teachers felt that they were held accountable for their planning and the enactment thereof and that their work was being

monitored regularly. The efficiency and routine of the system utilized in this phase was reflected in comments by one Foundation Phase teacher and one HOD:

We complete each term's LOs. We tick off our progress on our planning and reflect ... Planning goes in to the HOD every second week (PL 1 teacher).

The files, planning, log book, assessment files ... according to planning ... are checked by the HOD to see if tasks are done within the time frame and if all the planning and assessment standards have been covered. Before I check the work, my work goes to the deputy to be checked.

At the end of each term we send in copies of lesson plans and assessment tasks for the first three weeks of the new term.

When the first round of monitoring takes place, teachers send three to four profiles of their own choice, thereafter the HOD draws names randomly but by the end of the year the whole class is checked (F Phase HOD).

However, although the Foundation Phase HOD felt that monitoring of planning was thorough in the phase, one Foundation Phase teacher questioned whether the plans are purposefully scrutinized as no feedback is provided:

Planning goes to the HOD every second week ... I'm not sure if it's monitored because I left out two LOs and nobody came back to speak to me.

There was consensus amongst the SMT members that, at the InterSen level, the system for both monitoring and moderation was weak:

Class work is SUPPOSED to be checked by the HOD of that grade. Our work is SUPPOSED to be checked.

Moderation is not happening effectively at school. There are some grades where nothing is happening and others ... HODs are trying to implement or enforce

monitoring but the teachers are doing their own thing. They go past the HOD to the office to ask for extensions. If the principal agrees, then that's it.

Teachers generally felt that nobody was held accountable when moderation and monitoring of work did not occur.

Monitoring of resources

The responses of the HODs in the different phases indicated that the system for the monitoring of resources needed for class teaching was more effectively implemented and adhered to in the Foundation Phase than in the InterSen Phase. The Foundation Phase HOD explained the system used to keep track of the resources in that phase,

I do stocktaking. We've got an inventory list - we're not doing it on a termly basis, as it should be. If the teacher should leave I go check to see that all the things are there and they're handed back to me.

The responses of the other two SMT members teaching in the InterSen Phase did not indicate any definite system of monitoring the ordering or distribution of textbooks, resulting in a waste of money. She said, *"I feel we have over enough resources. These teachers are being spoilt but the resources are not being used."* Another SMT member explained the financial implication of the ineffective system:

... it's too free reign; Even 2008 books ... there are still books lying in that safe that came this year that's supposed to be dished out ... We've got - I don't know how many - store rooms and safes lying here full of books that's not being used! But every year we order. It's money down the drain.

With regard to a poor monitoring system for the duplication of work, one of the SMT members stated:

With duplicating, in some phases, people are wasting paper. We encourage people to roll off on two sides and people are still rolling off on one side. People also need 50 copies only but the machine runs on another 200. They walk away.

Support for professional teacher learning

Induction of new staff happened in a haphazard way, while staff development took the form of participation in departmental courses or private studies outside the school.

Systems for the induction of new staff members

The teachers interviewed generally expressed a lack of shared knowledge as to what induction system was used as many inconsistencies appeared in the explanations given. They suggested that the absence of a systematic approach impacted negatively on the ethos of the school and increased the level of frustration amongst staff members. There was no approved formal policy in place for the induction of new teachers.

Contradictory responses and a lack of shared knowledge regarding the induction system for new teachers were evident in the following responses: “*The [new] teacher meets the HOD and fellow teachers and it’s up to them to assist in whichever way possible*” (InterSen Phase teacher); “*Sometimes the principal introduces the teachers concerned, takes them to the head of the grade and LA heads*” (SMT member); “*... the HOD and learning area head work hand-in- hand with the teacher and eventually hand the teacher over to a capable mentor, not necessarily someone in a formal leadership position*” (principal). Two teachers commented on the negative impact of the teacher induction practices, the first one having started teaching at the school three years before, “*You’ll never believe how many times I had to leave my class to ask where or what!*” The second teacher agreed: “*The new teacher basically has to find their own feet.*”

Teachers felt that the inadequate support for new teachers impacted on their emotional state:

It impacts negatively on the morale of the new teachers because they have to find their own feet and you still have a class to see to. That's why I think a lot of new teachers leave soon. It's difficult if nothing is laid out for you (PL 1 teacher).

Practices for staff development

According to the majority of the teachers interviewed, planned, regular staff development was lacking at Meadowlands Primary. The teachers expressed a mixed feeling of excitement and frustration ... excitement about the individual impact of private studies and courses offered by the department and its service providers, yet frustration about the lack of systems for the development and support of the teachers at school level. An SMT member felt that there was a need for staff development, especially for the SMT: *"If there are problems, the staff always says, 'But the SMT is not functioning the way it should.'"* Additionally, an SMT member stated, *"Many more teachers are going off on stress. Why? They're not getting what they need at their school."* The principal acknowledged the need to address the fluctuating enthusiasm of teachers.

There was consensus among the teachers that external structures such as departmental workshops were in place to support teacher development and teacher learning. The responses, generally, indicated that teachers are keen to attend. The one SMT member stated, *"Workshops are being held and teachers are attending."* He went on to explain, *"Teachers enjoy courses - private studies - because they can use the information at school."* The deputy principal verified these sentiments, *"There are teachers studying privately and doing courses from the EMDC."* The principal affirmed, *"Our teachers are keen to attend workshops, both in-service training and private studies."* The teacher survey confirmed these sentiments, indicating that the teachers at Meadowlands Primary are keen to develop themselves. 42% of the teachers were currently involved in private studies, and were already qualified. Furthermore, 53% of the staff members had attended courses at the Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute (CTLI) in the last three years. One of the Foundation Phase teachers said, *"CTLI is on the ball where that is concerned. Other NGOs are also offering courses"*. However, concerns were raised about the WCED and CTLI offering the courses during

contact time. The Foundation Phase teacher found that teachers were reluctant to leave classes for two-week courses because they had to catch up with class work when they returned. However, there were reservations from certain teachers about the benefit to the school at large of individual teachers attending workshops or courses.

The responses of the interviewees generally indicated that, although teachers at Meadowlands Primary were enthusiastic about participating in teacher development activities, very few opportunities for teacher development activities had been created by management within the school, over the years.

Consequences

The malpractices did not, in general, nurture teacher collaboration, especially in the InterSen Phase, nor generate positive morale.

Consequences for teacher collaboration

Systems and practices were in place in the Foundation Phase at Meadowlands, thus providing a platform for collaborative work to occur. As a result the phase was more organized, plans were more coherent and there was a culture of buy-in and adherence to planning. The responses of the rest of the teachers indicated that structures that facilitate collaboration were lacking throughout the rest of the school. Even when individuals or grades used their initiative for impressive practices, there was no platform available to give acknowledgement to the ideas. With regard to problems not being resolved, the majority of the respondents had sound ideas for the upliftment of the state of affairs at the school. Instead of resigning themselves to the ineffective systems and practices at the school, they offered solutions to the problems experienced at the school. However, a lack of collaborative structures prevented these ideas from being shared, accepted as practice, and enacted within the school. Consequently, collaborative planning was not evident at InterSen level or in staff meetings and school events. The majority of staff members worked in isolation. It was evident in the interviews that teachers had not developed shared understandings of problems or a shared way of talking about school life.

Consequences for staff morale

The exasperation reflected by the interviewees at Meadowlands impacted negatively on me, as researcher, preventing me from doing more than one interview on the same day. At one stage, after reflecting on the progress made with my interviews at Meadowlands, it felt as though the interviews had turned into an onslaught on the management of the school, as most of the practices of management were criticised. In retrospect, I felt the teachers saw this as an opportunity to off-load in a safe environment. During the interviews the teachers at Meadowlands went off at a tangent about certain issues, and frequently re-iterated other unrelated matters depicting the frustrations experienced by the teachers at school. The interviewees constantly had to be steered back to the question at hand. Teachers were basically frustrated and despondent. With hindsight, this was actually an indication of the morale of the staff at Meadowlands.

The PL 1 teachers interviewed stated that the inadequate structures and systems within management itself resulted in an increase in teacher stress and a lowering of morale for both individual SMT members and the rest of the staff:

Seems now as though teachers must find their own feet but there is no guidance from top structure. You don't know where to go to, so you try to deal with your own problems. And when things reach a head or when teachers become stressed or whatever, then it comes to the office. Then, even then, nothing gets done. Problems are not sorted out. There is no structure with the SMT!

There was frustration about not using meetings optimally,

Teachers are a wealth of information and experience. We can learn from our colleagues. 'I have a child like that in my class and this is what I've done.' We are not using our time well enough (PL 1 teacher).

Another similar comment was made by the same teacher:

Why can't you just get together to discuss how do you feel today, the discipline for the day, what method are you using in your class. Why can't they discuss things like that. There are teachers who have great ideas of how they monitor their class ... the star programme and that ... why can't they exchange ideas like that, besides planning. And we need to, I don't know how, create the time for it because it's those things that boost the teacher's morale again.

One of the SMT members had the following comments to make regarding the negative impact of practices on staff morale,

I went through the PGP's [Personal Growth Plans] - where teachers want to see themselves in a year's time - and there are some people who are dying a slow death at this school. They have great ideas. They've been doing courses and developing themselves because they're not getting it at their school. The complaints in those PGP's are serious, serious, serious complaints.

This same SMT member felt that management had not acted upon these complaints.

In general, the interviewees displayed low morale due to a lack of faith in the principal, in particular. This resulted in teachers not trusting the principal to address problems, inadvertently increasing the stress and frustration level of the staff. The SMT members, especially the women, expressed great dissatisfaction with the way in which they were managed. The interviewees were generally displeased and frustrated about the current situation.

Half of the interviewees used humour as a coping mechanism in an attempt to hide the pandemonium and despair. "Our teachers are getting close to 100% for the IQMS. According to the marks," says a PL 1 teacher, "our school should be running the EMDC (laughter) ... the marks are FAR too high!" In response to a question about whether or not the SMT was pro-active, the one SMT member stated, after a hearty laugh, "To me, as a new

SMT member, it was a shock to see that things discussed in SMT meetings are not followed through.” In response to the same question, another SMT member went into a fit of raucous laughter and shouted out, “No, no, no!!!”

Generally, SMT members were disgruntled about the principal’s inability to sense the needs of the school. The following comments are from two different SMT members:

For example, from the principal’s side, some things that are seen as important to the rest of the SMT members are not of interest to him and I have an idea that he doesn’t like to meet with the SMT ... and to me it’s important that the SMT meets regularly to get the feeling of the other SMT members and to see to certain things and the management of the school.

We’re not going anywhere. We’re going back at a faster rate than we’re going forward. We’re going to lose good teachers within the next five years. They’re either going to find better jobs or better schools to go to. It’s going to impact on the remaining teachers and on the learners.

The comments from two SMT members indicated that morale needed to be boosted at the school, especially the morale of the SMT:

But if management isn’t even disciplined, how do you expect to still demand respect from your post level one teachers? If your top structure is not functioning as one, how will the PL 1 teachers respect the SMT? Things like this are being said amongst the staff already, ‘Because the SMT is not functioning as they should, that’s why we can do this and that.’ The people who are on this SMT are people who are hungry for duties and that’s the only way you are going to grow and that’s not being given to them, so they’re stagnating. They’re not being utilised, they’re not being used and they have skills, they have talents, they have a lot to give to help the school grow but it’s not being used.

The way the school is being run is like a two-man¹¹ ship ... you're going nowhere because basically you need to utilise everybody on your team.

There was consensus amongst the interviewees that individual and private studies had served to improve the morale of teachers:

Both the CTLI courses and private studies have impacted positively on my life. It has boosted my morale by 100%! Teachers are equipped to handle situations better because they are more stimulated to handle certain things, because now they are wiser (F Phase teacher).

It has made them more confident and has changed the way they look at that certain learning area and it can be used in other learning areas too (SMT member).

Teachers are energized with new ideas and this flows over into the classroom. I feel that the children are quite excited by the fact that we have teachers studying at our school (principal).

Although the teachers interviewed appeared frustrated with the lack of sound management at the school, the mixed responses of the teachers indicated that generally teachers were content to be at the school. The following comments from the staff, in response to a survey question asking them to describe their experience of teaching at Meadowlands Primary, reflect these mixed responses:

Great; exhausting; happy; unsure; learning all the time; fine; many things need to change; brick wall; frustrating; content; fortunate; positive; frustrated with unfairness; enjoyable; in a good space; proud; very rewarding; everybody talks but little or no improvement; good; challenging; constructive experience; fulfilling;

¹¹ This reference to a 'two-man ship' expressed the frustration of a female member of the SMT at being excluded from decision-making.

pleasant; our school is the best; frustrated but positive; staff has potential to reach greater heights; I feel useful because I am of service to young learners.

Two of the teachers explained the apparent contradiction between these positive sentiments and their more negative assessments of systems and practices at the school by pointing out that there were material benefits associated with being at a school that was better off than many other historically disadvantaged schools. Compared to the neighbouring primary schools and many historically disadvantaged schools, Meadowlands was perceived to be a relatively well-resourced school possessing many of the modern technological conveniences of computers, internet facilities, sophisticated duplicating machines and a constant supply of duplicating paper. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents felt that Meadowlands had the potential to operate on a higher level if the SMT learnt to work as a team.

CASE STUDY 2: COLWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

In this section I present the analysis of the interview transcriptions and the information collected in the survey pertaining to Colworth Primary School. I identify the management practices and the consequences of these practices at Colworth according to the themes identified in Table 7.

Systems and practices for the development of an optimal teaching and learning environment

In this section I look at whether systems and practices are evident for the following: generating policies and plans, addressing poor results, addressing problems and tensions, according recognition to teachers, sharing information, planning of lessons and school events, monitoring of lesson planning and resources, and support for professional teacher learning.

There was consensus among the respondents that, generally, a fairly uniform set of systems and practices was evident at Colworth Primary and that policies were in place and adhered to, adding to the stability of the school. However, the charisma and vigilance of the principal, as an individual, was important in ensuring that systems were implemented. His personal

presence animated management practices and drew others in in a way that is evident in the responses throughout this chapter. The responses indicated that there was consistency between the Foundation Phase and InterSen Phase.

Systems for generating and reviewing policies and plans

There was consensus that all policies and school plans were drafted collaboratively, adhered to and reviewed and workshopped regularly.

Two of the SMT members explained the reason for adherence to the policies at Colworth:

The reason for our policies being a working document is that we sat together to draw it up.

As a staff, we put an enormous amount of time and energy into the drafting of all our policies.

There was consensus that adhering to policies was part of the culture of the school, as the deputy principal explained,

Every term teachers go through the same process when adhering to the document regarding intervention strategies.

However, the principal was strategic in ensuring that there is adherence to the policies and that they were workshopped. The principal supplies another reason for adherence,

... things are happening at our school and because of the growth, teachers remain enthusiastic about translating policies into action. These encouraging experiences have provided enormous motivation for the staff.

The completed SIP had been drafted collaboratively. In addition, the principal assumed responsibility for keeping the staff focused on the goals. As one of the PL 1 teachers explained, “*The principal regularly keeps us focused via meetings and mentions our SIP.*”

The one PL 1 teacher indicated that they were given timely notification of which policies will be reviewed:

We were told before the meeting, 'These are the policies we're going to look at. Read over the old ones. Work at it, see where we can change.'

Systems for addressing poor results and improving pedagogic practices

Many teachers cited examples of how a focus is maintained on improving pedagogic practices in order to improve the results of learners, mentioning for example that teachers routinely discussed ways of improving teaching skills and adapting pedagogic practices. An SMT member explained that the school adjusted their practices after receiving the LitNum test results:

Ever since the inception of the LitNum testing, after receiving the results, we've put strategies in place. Once they are received ... come ...we obviously talk about it the HOD calls the teachers together.

Pedagogic practices were reflected upon in a systematic manner. One SMT member explained that there is a system in place to address the results where they “*analyse the results in the various categories and, even if the results are fair, reflect upon our practices.*” Another SMT member explained that, after numerous meetings and discussions, the school introduced new practices to improve the numeracy results:

We've put certain steps in place to assist the children in Maths. Each child is getting an InstaMaths book. We have to ensure extra work is done at home. We want to expose the children to different types of tests such as AMASI. Also, we draw up mock tests just to get children into the routine of sitting for the longer hours.

Teacher meetings and discussions to improve pedagogic practices not only focused on improving the results as a school, but also on the weaker learners individually:

At the moment we have two remedial teachers, a reading teacher and, next year, we're going to have a Maths teacher who is going to float around. So, there's a lot of remedial taking place ... (SMT member).

Adapting pedagogic practices and improving the performance of teachers involved, according to one of the SMT members, venturing outside the boundaries and immediate vicinity of the school:

A couple of years ago we went on a drive to go out to other schools to see how they do it, to adapt our practices as well. We usually go to the better schools to see if we're on par and to see if we can improve our practices at the school.

Furthermore, he stated that the system used to improve practices at the school involved consulting the parent community,

We sent out a questionnaire to the staff and to the parents where they had to rate all the areas of the school and the feedback we got was fairly positive.

According to the deputy, the school was attempting to improve the current system of their teaching by introducing something new:

... what we're trying to do, it will take some time ... I think it will be up and running by next year this time ... we want those lateral reference groups, where all the grade 1s, where each grade displays ten of the books so that we can see where it threads through, the progression.

Systems for addressing problems and tensions

There was consensus amongst the teachers that there was a reliable, effective system in place for addressing learner problems at school and class level. At times management, as a whole,

addressed teacher tensions or conflict but frequently the principal dealt with the problems. Staff development activities minimised the chances of conflict situations arising and also enabled teachers to resolve their own issues. As the principal stated,

Our teachers have been given sufficient skills over the years to sort out situations respectfully. Teachers are given platforms to raise issues to prevent situations becoming explosive when they are 'boiling over' with frustration.

All the teachers interviewed described a similar procedure involving the process involved for handling discipline issues. According to the interviewees, conflict situations were addressed as soon as they arose.

An SMT member cited how they step in, as a team, to resolve unpleasant situations. In one instance, a teacher was disrespectful to the principal at a staff meeting:

... we [the SMT] met without them because we felt the situation was too volatile to have them both present. We then called a meeting with the two of them.

An SMT member mentioned that, even with the use of resources, problems were quickly addressed and resolved as soon as they were detected, *"We used to have free access to the Rhizograph but that caused havoc. Now Gareth duplicates for us."*

The teachers interviewed indicated that a few of the systems that were used to address problems and shortcoming at school involved the use of outside sources. Outside support structures were utilized to offer relief for the more serious problems that arose. These are illustrated in the following two quotes by SMT members:

The Disciplinary Committee assumes responsibility once the transgression becomes repetitive. Sometimes learners have to go to Nicro [National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Rehabilitation of the Offender] or for some other counselling for more serious issues.

A mother told me her grade 6 son, who was in my class, was going to the toilet with page three of Die Son [bilingual tabloid]... naked ladies ... and he was showing some other sexual signs, causing concern. I called up the local nurses to ask for assistance. They contacted psychologists and they dealt with it. He's doing OK now.

Systems for the recognition of teachers' contributions

There was a general sense, in responses, that the contributions of individuals at all levels were valued by others. However, there was no specific formal routine system in place for the recognition of individual contributions by management. The morale of teachers was not negatively impacted upon by the lack of a formal system, as the staff generally felt appreciated by the principal and management. According to the respondents, there were informal practices that accord recognition to the staff members for their hard work. Recognition was given in occasional impromptu events:

If I think of the new school hall, when it was launched two years ago, we got certificates! He personally wrote a thank you sentiment on each certificate. I mean, really now! He surprised us with that. I think he's different when compared to other principals I've taught under because he cares about the person within the teacher (PL 1 teacher).

The teachers generally felt valued by the principal mainly because he used his initiative to go beyond the call of duty when according recognition to them.

Systems for the sharing of information

There was consensus about the regularity of meetings, implying that systems and structures were effective and embedded in the culture of the school. The teachers generally spoke of a sense of team work. The deputy said of the meetings,

Ideas are exchanged, opinions are raised, teachers disagree and sometimes lose their cool ... but at the end of the day, we move on.

An SMT member stated that they believe in discussing issues first and then arriving at decisions collectively, “*Times are agreed upon, nothing is dictated.*” A different SMT member explained that they had no option but to discuss ideas and their viability before imposing programmes on teachers:

It’s senseless we come with programmes. Teachers firstly have to either accept the programmes or changes. Teachers are usually very honest to say it’s not going to work or they are willing to give it a go. If it doesn’t work then it doesn’t work, then we just go back to the drawing board.

Making and implementing plans

In this section, practices impacting on planning for teaching in the class, as well as the planning for school events, are identified. I ascertain whether there is enactment of this planning and whether there is a system in place for the procurement and distribution of resources.

Generally, the responses of the interviewees indicated that the systems used were uniform and implemented routinely as part of the culture of the school.

Lesson planning

There was consensus amongst the interviewees that planning was rigorous, formal, documented and translated into action across the phases. The interviewees also felt that planning impacted on practices as there was general adherence to planning. According to the responses of teachers the planning for the school’s activities was based on collaborative work, as is expressed by these comments:

We workshop our planning. We use newsprint and write down what we’ve covered and paste it in the room. And we literally walk around (laughter) ... and a few are responsible for checking the work schedule, others the learning programme (F Phase teacher).

So we plot that together as a phase (F Phase HOD).

Our teachers sit together to do their planning... (InterSen HOD).

Planning for school events

According to the responses of teachers, meticulous planning for the school's long term goals was based on collaborative work, as is illustrated by these two quotes of the deputy:

A long time ago when Martin first became principal, we spent a lot of time discussing where we want to go. We said, 'We want to build a hall, a library, a computer centre.' Now we look back and say, 'We've actually achieved those things!' And it's not as though somebody is sitting there and saying, this is the vision of the school, buy into it or not. We didn't all miraculously come to the same idea, we debated quite a bit.

... we had to say what we envisaged for our school, e.g. the library, canteen and computer centre, and step inside the circle. Then we prioritized the details. Then we put it on paper. Then we called in someone to build the idea on the board - a miniature version of the buildings. It was there, in your face, every morning.

There was consensus among the respondents that whole-school planning was thorough and meticulous at Colworth, as illustrated by these comments of the deputy principal regarding the teachers' strike of 2007:

There were weeks of preparation for the strike, so we had time to speak through issues. It was quite a safe place. Everybody was aware of consequences and repercussions from the WCED.

With the strike, we put it to the teachers and told them we need to be responsible. It's not like in the past where you just stay away and leave the children to run around at home or on the road. Also they need to remember that there's going to be consequences. It caused no division. They came back, had money deducted and we said we admire them ... and they knew their names must go in.

Planning for the procurement of resources

The management of procurement of textbooks provides an example of the degree to which management practices support teaching and learning.

According to the interviewees, there were no hiccups with the procurement and distribution of textbooks and resources. According to the responses of the teachers, a needs analysis for resources was done collectively before an order is placed with the deputy:

When the grade 2s realised a few years ago they were really out of reading material, they went to the deputy. Or she would come to us and say, 'There's x amount of money for this phase. Talk with your group and decide where the need is the greatest' (F Phase HOD).

Generally, the teachers expressed a respect for the system of procurement:

But we have to justify it, of course. Like, if the grade 1s bought books two or three years ago, they're not going to buy it again because we need to be accountable for the ones we've just bought (F Phase HOD).

Monitoring of lesson planning and resources

Lesson planning

The responses of the teachers indicated that the system of monitoring and moderation was meticulous and part of the school culture. The Foundation Phase teacher commented on the system used:

Our previous HOD, 'Yo!' she was on the ball! She kept us on our toes, not in a bad way ... We would get our planning calendar. She was thorough and to the point, there was no dodging. Everything was signed. She left but her legacy lived on. However, our new HOD has added on the existing structure.

The Foundation Phase HOD stated that the system used was a routine and thorough one:

I monitor the learner books, the teachers' admin pieces like educator portfolio, learner portfolio, planning, prep, on a weekly basis; We have a tick-off sheet where we check whether things are being done, whether things are in place, whether teachers are actually doing what they're supposed to.

The monitoring of work was included on the planning calendar and adhered to. As the one SMT member said, "... teachers are aware well in advance as to when prep books, journals containing planning, assessment books, are to be moderated."

The SMT members explain that moderation of work is done thoroughly at different levels:

... on the Monday of that week all the grade 3s prep will be verified and moderated firstly by the grade head who collects the books and checks that the work has been prepared. Then it comes to the HOD who then monitors at another level (F Phase HOD).

We also check through the work as the TST because every teacher who has a child with a learning barrier has to bring in the profiles and portfolios of those children and of the teacher so that we can check for the Link Team (deputy).

The teachers generally acknowledged that the monitoring of work was now being carried out to ensure quality assurance:

Besides moderating, we are now checking on quality. It's reflected on our term planner. We're doing a literacy task on Friday. Whoever is responsible for the first task is bringing the task and we're going to evaluate the quality of it so that we're going to learn from our discussion (PL 1 teacher).

We review our moderation tools quite regularly because we are busy developing and as your knowledge of your LA [learning area] improves and your knowledge develops something that was good enough two or three years ago might not satisfy you now. This year we added what types of tools you are using to moderate: only memos or

checklists, etc. Now we're rating the quality, the types of questioning the teachers are using (SMT member).

On Friday we're doing peer assessment where all the teachers will bring their teacher portfolios and an example of one of the children's portfolios and profiles. And then we see what's in there (SMT member).

Monitoring of resources

There was consensus amongst the interviewees that the ordering and use of resources was monitored, as expressed by an SMT member,

We have free access to photocopies but use is being monitored. When we feel there is abuse of the equipment, which will be traced by the frequency toner has to be replaced, we will be called to book.

Support for professional teacher learning

Induction of new staff happens in a routine way, while staff development takes the form of participation in departmental courses or team building workshop involving the whole staff.

Systems for the induction of new staff members

It was acknowledged by all the interviewees that no formal policy was in place for the induction of new staff members but that there was a system that was being used and that it was a uniform and effective one. The Foundation Phase teacher explained,

The grade head takes the new teacher under her wing but it's a very informal arrangement. She'll ask questions and we'll all help. When the new grade 2 teacher had to have a parent meeting she asked me to be present, which I gladly did. I answered the questions that she could not. So, we always offer support.

Different respondents gave similar explanations as to how the system worked, and agreed that it was effective. As the principal stated, *“the policies basically explain what the processes and structures are at school.”*

Practices for staff development

There was consensus that internal structures and systems were in place to address teacher development and that these practices had impacted positively on the general tone of the school. The school was involved in many teacher development projects and courses involving service providers. The following comments of an SMT member implied that their staff development projects were well-planned: *“The nice thing about it is that we didn’t wait for a crisis to happen to go on the team builder.”*

Furthermore, an SMT member said that the principal was strategic in setting the tone for the concept of buy-in to spontaneous participation of the teachers in staff development:

He [principal] reads a lot and stays on top of all the latest educational trends and happenings. And then he bounces it off us. If we buy into it, he implements it. I think the fresh ideas and alternatives that he provides for us in workshops and daily chats keep us invigorated.

There was consensus amongst the interviewees that the school had organised many staff development activities for the teachers. These events were organised or elicited by the school and teachers participated collectively as a staff rather than individually. Many of these opportunities were due to the support of organisations and companies. This is evident in the following quotes from the SMT members:

Our school works with EMAP, an extra-mural NGO, and through this NGO they’ve brought many, many service providers to the school.

EMAP, an NGO, sponsored us and provided an opportunity for us to visit Denmark a few years ago, to do shadow teaching for a few weeks.

We were fortunate that a couple of years ago we got funding from various companies and donors to be able to allow us to go on staff developments and workshops and team builders and so on.

The principal explained that teachers were usually keen to attend workshops.

Consequences

The practices, in general, nurtured teacher collaboration at all three levels - grade, phase and staff - and generated positive morale.

Consequences for teacher collaboration

The strong sense of ownership, solidarity and collaboration was revealed in the consistent use of the pronoun “we” by all the interviewees. The common language, suggesting a collaborative culture, is evident in these quotes:

At the moment we are re-looking our policies (F Phase teacher).

We naturally all just seem to be in the same boat (InterSen teacher).

When we anticipate resistance to change, for example, moving teachers to a new grade, the HODs get together and we start to talk to soften the blow (deputy).

We view all our policies as working documents and we stick to them (principal).

The Foundation Phase HOD stated that a benefit of operating collaboratively was that practices were improved by the sharing of ideas, “... *as HOD you get to see good practices and creative ideas across the phase and you can share it with everyone at the next phase meeting.*”

According to the responses of the majority of the interviewees, the culture of the school encouraged collaborative work, even when this was seen in terms of working to support the next teacher. The following problem related to an SMT member being overwhelmed by her workload and where collaborative work offered a sense of relief to an individual teacher:

He [principal] didn't call me in but approached the grade heads and explained my position. He firstly asked them if they were aware of it and many of them said they could see it. Then he asked them how they felt they could temporarily support me to alleviate my workload, and they volunteered for different tasks. He didn't force them (SMT member).

In a similar vein, an SMT member explained,

Last year I could see one of the SMT members who was responsible for caretakers and buildings ... and he was also on the DC ... was sinking. So I volunteered to do all his planning for him. No fuss. He gets all the files, all covered and everything. Nobody's acting in isolation.

Consequences for staff morale

Initially, during the interview at Colworth Primary, I fleetingly wondered if the various participants had been coached by their principal to respond uniformly, as I found it bizarre that they all expressed strikingly similar responses not only to the questions on procedural and policy matters but also with their general opinions and observations. However, I quickly gained the impression, as the interviews progressed, that these participants *had* been schooled, but *not* for the purpose of creating a healthy picture for research purposes ... the principal had consistently workshopped certain issues so thoroughly with his staff over the months and years via regular meetings and staff development workshops that they were all focused in the same direction! I found the interviews to be much shorter yet much more informative. The teachers were all focused, positive, proud, yet blatantly candid regarding certain situations at the school where they felt there were inadequacies. I found the lucidity of the answers reassuring. In retrospect, this was an indication of the high staff morale evident at Colworth Primary School.

There was consensus amongst the teachers interviewed that: there is high staff morale, a strong sense of camaraderie and mutual care at Colworth. The teachers are generally energized by teaching at Colworth Primary, as the Foundation Phase teacher says:

... today [during interval] I was in my class. I'm so excited because I got new work cards that I want to make so I want to get that done ... I want to laminate them. So, there's no time for chitter-chatter (laughter).

We set the bar for ourselves. Nobody forced us to work this hard, you put the pressure on yourself. There's a definite ethos of work here!

The following comments from the staff, in response to a survey question asking them to describe their experience of teaching at Colworth Primary, reflected that the teachers were generally pleased to be at the school:

Excited; happy; friendly and supportive environment; passionate; enthusiastic; committed; great; school and management open to change; teachers work co-operatively; thoroughly enjoy it; challenging but fulfilling; empowered; unforgettable; challenging; tired; demanding but rewarding; loving it; challenging; stimulated; exciting; fun; pro-active; visionary; OK; enthused.

Mutual care, respect and affection was illustrated in the following quotes, “... maybe if you've gone on the internet, you share with others” (PL 1 teacher). An SMT member stated, “I think the support offered to teachers by other teachers in the same grade and phase, in particular, also helps a lot with this [sticking to planning]”.

All the teachers felt that there were systems in place at the school for boosting the morale: “If you're not feeling well, you let them know and they'll come in and help you” (PL 1 teacher); “We also keep ourselves motivated by remaining focused on the teaching aspect” (SMT member); “The open-door policy we have at school has helped a lot in building up our staff morale” (SMT member). Additionally, one of the PL 1 teachers said, with regard to the days when teachers feel frustrated, “It's a shared feeling, you never feel that you're alone” and, “The teacher next door to me will come in and ask me if I'm okay or if I need help with my marking (laughter). There's just that bond that we do have on a daily basis” and “I think we, as a staff, generally keep each other motivated.” The one SMT member stated, “We tease one another at school and say, ‘Come on! Don't walk, run!’”

According to one of the PL 1 teachers,

Everybody helps you to get on board. At other schools I've been at, it was all about me, what I can do, what is up on my walls. But here, one thing I like is the sharing that takes place.

The principal felt that,

A major contributor to this continual high that teachers are on ... with the occasional, short-lived dip here and there ... is the shared responsibility. Teachers don't only support each other with learner problems but they are so perceptive, they can sense when there is a problem.

One of the SMT members said,

It's a healthy set-up but it's not blissful all the time. We have, like any organisation does, people who are extremely negative and who pull down. But the joke is ... they're still here!

Additionally, this teacher said,

I think the fact that we've bonded as a staff also plays a major part in our staff remaining motivated. It's almost as though we supplement each other ... we fill the gaps for each other and boost each other when it's needed.

The confidence, expertise and self-esteem acquired through regular staff development courses and sessions were evident in the following comments by the various SMT members:

When I started here people were all to themselves. If you had to ask them to address a hall full of parents, most of them were nervous. But ask them to do it now, you must actually interrupt them and ask them to stop because they've developed in terms of public speaking, in terms of self esteem.

Soon after we all attended the co-operative learning workshop, three of the SMT members attended a big workshop for principals, deputies and HODs at Sweet Hill High. We were asked to present a topic to the group and I suggested we speak on co-operative learning. The other teachers were flabbergasted at our incredible presentation. That gave us great satisfaction.

When teachers are equipped with all this information, it makes them want to work. It makes them confident. It makes them want to excel. At most workshops you need to present and you can see our teachers are hungry to present, to show off their new methods and what they've learnt.

Due to the confidence boost of attending regular workshops and applying whatever they've learnt, our teachers are very vocal at workshops.

Generally, the answers of the interviewees reflected that the focus on teaching helped with the morale. An SMT member was of the opinion that, *"We keep ourselves motivated by remaining focused on the teaching aspect."* Furthermore, another SMT member insinuated that the advantage to being so busy and focused was, *"there's no time to 'stook' [initiate trouble]"*.

The majority of teachers inferred that the outlook and drive of the principal had impacted positively on the self-esteem of the staff. The vigilance of the principal had a positive spin-off for the morale of teachers and encouraged the development of a caring, supportive environment, as is reflected in the following quotes:

The principal will remind us ... he has his little pep talks in the morning ... and then he says he gets onto his soap box ... he doesn't do it ... it's not like it's planned ... but he'll remind us to care for each other, to look after each other, to be there for each other (InterSen Phase teacher).

... we're certainly a motivated staff. Thanks to working under a motivated principal. Sometimes I wonder where he gets his incessant optimism and energy from! AND how he manages to be so consistent about it! (SMT member)

There was consensus that the staff had a high morale due largely to ownership and an accompanying adherence to policies and planning. An SMT member felt that there was a ripple effect on the staff when the principal started studying a few years ago and that it encouraged other to follow suit. *"If you ask anybody here what the vision is,"* said one of the SMT members, *"they will know because they've all bought into it."* The interviewees generally viewed the principal as being instrumental for the sense of ownership. *"Other principals were nice people but they didn't get the staff on board ..."* stated a Foundation Phase teacher.

The teachers all agreed that the principal was a visionary leader and a great motivator:

I think he makes all the difference, definitely. I'm not trying to put a star on his forehead but he's got a vision and he wants us to go places and do things and sometimes you're just not in the mood to do that but he's a motivator (F Phase teacher).

We've been blessed with a principal that seems to be visionary. He seems to have this ability to see things almost two years down the line. So there always seems to be structures in place for the unforeseen, e.g. retrenchments, roll drops or increases (InterSen Phase teacher).

An SMT member felt that the principal took a personal interest in the well-being of each teacher:

He's extremely sensitive to the needs of the individual people. I don't feel that you're just there to do a job. He really is concerned about you. Then that makes you want to do your best.

It's always about, 'What do our teachers need?' At the end of last year, before we met, he said to the HODs we needed to go back to our phases and ask them what they need to make their job easier. He often does that.

With regard to the principal creating a healthy tone, one of the PL 1 teachers stated,

He always reminds us where we were and where we are today. He had that vision but he couldn't do it on his own. He needed his team. He's very much for team work.

The teachers generally felt that the principal acknowledged that they were sensible and trustworthy, and this helped to boost the morale of the staff. This sense of trust is illustrated in the following quote by an InterSen teacher:

Last year we had a production and the profit was split amongst the classes. Each class basically got R1 000 which the individual teacher could use to purchase anything they felt their class needed; The principal just trusted the judgment of each teacher to buy something educational for their class.

Various teachers at Colworth expressed some concern about the way practices are impacting on them. One of the concerns was that the fast working-pace of the school was impacting on their ability to always keep morale high, as was expressed by these two comments from teachers across the management levels:

Sometimes I think, we've accomplished a lot, now we can sit back. But he [principal] says 'No, there's still more to it.' It can be tiring because it's always for the children but sometimes I think ... but what about me? (PL 1 teacher)

This is sad though [fast pace]... often, in the past, we used to ring the bell earlier and say, 'Come to the staffroom for tea and scones' but we don't do that anymore. Life has become too hectic and nobody's free anymore to make scones. (SMT member)

Another concern that was raised was time management. *“Something that came up from many teachers,”* the Foundation Phase HOD stated, *“is that we need time for admin and planning. Teachers are doing a lot of these things at home, in family time.”* As the InterSen Phase HOD explained, *“It’s tough, at the moment we’re running against time. Most of my admin work I do at home: letters, planning, marking.”*

One of the SMT members felt that the system of constant review is unsettling for some teachers. She said, *“What frustrates some teachers is that we’re constantly in a state of review. So, you’re just getting used to something when it’s changed.”*

An additional challenge, as stated by another SMT member, was that, with the school producing good results, there was an increase in the number of weaker learners that the school was attracting,

We find that we get a lot of remedial learners from other schools and we realise that it’s almost like a hospital ... if it’s a good hospital and you have all the facilities and instruments then obviously everybody’s going to flock to that hospital.

Generally, systems and practices at Colworth were effective. They assisted in creating an environment where collaborative work occurred and staff morale was high. The interviewees unanimously credited the principal as being central to the effective way in which the school operated and crucial to the tone of the school. The question that needs to be raised here is, ‘How effectively will the school operate without the current principal?’

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I discuss my findings with a focus on: (1) differentiating between the management practices of Meadowlands Primary and Colworth Primary, (3) ascertaining the extent to which the practices at each school impact on the development of a PLC. I present a comparative discussion of the two schools for each of the following themes: management practices, mutual care, respect and collective responsibility, and teacher morale. Finally, I discuss the implications of the study.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Meadowlands Primary School and Colworth Primary School had distinctly different management practices and cultures which had implications for whether practices were effective and systems were in place for the smooth running of the entire school, whether mutual care and respect were evident and whether platforms were created for collaboration. There were also major differences in the morale of the SMTs and teachers and differences in the degree of job satisfaction at each school.

Management practices

Structures and systems were in place in isolated areas at Meadowlands Primary School. The contradictory responses and lack of common knowledge of the interviewees at Meadowlands indicated that communication channels were ineffectual. The result was a haphazard way in which activities occurred, with an accompanying sense of disorganisation and disorderliness.

There were differences between the phases. The Foundation Phase functioned in a more structured and systematic way than did the InterSen Phase, resulting in work being monitored more regularly and better enactment of planning. Poor time management impacted more seriously on the InterSen Phase than on the Foundation Phase. Often, plans were not produced or they were produced and not implemented. This was evident in the fact that assessment standards for learning areas were not covered for each year.

Poor learner results were not diagnosed systematically, on a whole school basis. Instead, teachers responded individually to individual learners. Pedagogic practices that had produced the weak results were maintained. There were no structured opportunities for reflective practice. Teachers saw the tests as providing feedback to the provincial department and not as having relevance to practices within the school. No remedial work or whole school intervention was attempted at Meadowlands. Certain teachers felt that these were the problems of the grade 3 and grade 6 teachers only. While activities had been introduced in earlier years, in response to weak results, these had not been sustained.

Systems were not in place for procurement and distribution of resources such as textbooks. Textbooks from previous years had accumulated in the school safe and orders had been duplicated due to a lack of monitoring.

In contrast, the predictable way in which jobs were carried out at Colworth indicated that the structures and systems were entrenched in the daily practices of the school. The result was a more stable school where routine encouraged a more tranquil environment. All the interviewees had a shared understanding of practices employed when addressing the discipline-problems of learners. The school displayed a culture of reflective practice which included regularly revisiting and reconsidering practices relating to teaching, monitoring, moderation and quality control. The teachers met to reflect on pedagogic practices and adapt practices where necessary. The WCED LitNum results for Colworth were analysed, intervention strategies were introduced and practices were put in place to address poor school results. Monitoring and moderation were uniformly implemented throughout the phases. Structures and systems were in place for quality assurance resulting in more thorough scrutiny of the learners' work which, in turn, improved the standards of teachers' work. The principal was strategic in ensuring that there was adherence to planning. His vigilance prevented structures from weakening and systems from malfunctioning.

Mutual care, respect and collective responsibility

The responses of the interviewees at Meadowlands indicated that teachers were absorbed in the problems of the school to the extent that self-interest was more important than mutual

care for colleagues and collective responsibility for the learners' results. There was a culture of fault-finding rather than a caring one. Many structures, systems and practices were criticised. The SMT members indicated a lack of faith in the team as a whole. Some SMT members did not regard themselves as part of a team, which, in itself, lead to poor management practices and a lack of collective responsibility. The practices of management, particularly by the principal, were criticized by the SMT members. A concern for a lack of confidentiality was expressed by a PL 1 teacher as well as an SMT member who were interviewed.

The attitudes expressed by some respondents bordered on contempt for the office of the principal, as was evident in the tone of responses during the interviews when alluding to the principal. It is implied in the responses of the interviewees that the learners did not acknowledge the authority of the principal. All these factors were indicative of weak management practices at the school.

On the other hand, stable structures and predictable systems were in place at Colworth. These laid the foundation for the mutual care and support being offered by colleagues. The teachers at Colworth could focus their energy outwards, to others, as they were not distracted by issues relating to an ineffective infrastructure. Mutual care was evident in the shared responsibility displayed by the teachers. This sense of caring enabled the staff members to intuitively help others experiencing challenging times.

The teachers at Colworth were generally respectful towards each other and management, as was evident from the way in which they expressed themselves during the interviews. The principal's role was important in creating a supportive, working environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. As a staff, the teachers discussed ways of adapting pedagogic practices to improve the learners' results, indicating a strong sense of collective responsibility. His support and care resulted in a committed staff that was keen on going beyond the call of duty, as is evident in their willingness to do voluntarily work outside school hours.

Collaborative work

While there were isolated cases of collaboration at Meadowlands, the culture was more generally that characterized by an egg carton syndrome. The Foundation Phase worked collaboratively, not only across the phase, but also within the three grades. This is indicative of sound management practices in the phase. The Foundation Phase HOD and the one deputy worked collaboratively to ensure that there was uniformity and consistency in the phase.

The InterSen Phase, however, worked collaboratively in certain grades only. There was little collaboration across the grades. SMT members expressed a concern that issues that they felt were important were viewed as less important by the principal, and thus not addressed. They felt that the principal avoided having meetings with them.

Platforms were not created at Meadowlands to do thorough feedback or to discuss teaching or workshop policies. This only added to the frustration level of teachers as they had no place to air their views or share their experiences. Teachers were eager to get systems and structures in place as was evident from all the ideas that emanated from the interviews. The lack of collaborative structures at the school meant that these ideas were not discussed and problems were not addressed and resolved. The teachers saw the staff versus management as 'them' and 'us' illustrating a lack of collaborative work between management and the ordinary teacher. This was evident in the lack of ownership of policies, vision and general planning at the school. Teachers were unaware of the procedures at the school and unfamiliar with the contents of the school policies. The school's vision was unknown to teachers, and there was no adherence, generally, to whole school planning. Management at Meadowlands failed to unite and enlighten the staff mainly because there was no solidarity among the SMT itself as they were not operating collaboratively.

Activities at Colworth indicated the presence of a culture of collaborative work. The result was a united staff, fully aware of the modus operandi of the school. Planning, at each of the three levels - grade, phase and at school - was done collaboratively. Whole school planning, in particular, was more comprehensive than at Meadowlands because of the pooled expertise. This was evident in the approach to adapting pedagogic practices in an attempt to improve the learners' results. There was a high degree of ownership and adherence to planning and

policies, as teachers felt included in the decision-making and planning processes. Teachers worked well with the SMT mainly due to a consultative approach being adopted before decisions are reached.

Teachers at Colworth shared a common vocabulary when describing practices at their school. Words that were used frequently were: working documents, visionary leader, workshop, motivated. This shared language reflected regular collaborative work and frequent informal conversations among staff members.

The principal at Colworth was instrumental in ensuring pervasive collaborative work. He achieved buy-in for many different ventures by promoting these ventures to the staff and explaining the benefits. These ventures included building a school hall, library and computer centre.

Teacher morale

At Meadowlands, the principal seemed to be unaware of the negative ethos at the school. He blamed most of the problems experienced at school on the lack of support and direction offered by the local Education District. In contrast, all the SMT members expressed a sense of despair and an accompanying low morale. They were despondent about the fact that they were not acting as a team and that they were not given recognition by the principal. The female SMT members were even more frustrated due to sexism that was experienced within the SMT. Instead of trying to improve the morale of the SMT, the principal bonded with other male non-SMT members.

The teachers at Meadowlands were generally frustrated. The basic reasons for the sense of frustration and despair were: the disjointed way in which management operated, a feeling of mistrust in management, ineffective structures, systems and planning, and a lack of communication about the vision of the school. This served to increase the anxiety level of teachers and added to the disorderliness at the school. Teachers explained that their main source of stress came from poor management practices. The new teachers, in particular, were disorientated due to ineffective support structures for the induction process. One consequence was a high absenteeism rate. There had been effective structures, systems and

practices in place under the previous principal but poor maintenance of - and few improvements upon - these systems, structures and practices had caused the old infrastructure to crumble. This impacted negatively on the morale, particularly, of those teachers who had taught under the previous principal. All these problems served as distractions to the teachers who lost their focus on their main purpose at the school, which was teaching. The SMT was not able to motivate the staff as they themselves were not motivated. The morale of the teachers was directly proportional to the morale of the SMT.

The morale of the staff at Colworth was high. Camaraderie was evident in the support offered among the teachers, as well as in the mutual care displayed towards each other. Collaborative structures were in place and served to improve morale, team spirit and a sense of job satisfaction. Teachers affectionately and light-heartedly teased each other about the busyness of their school day and the way they were conducting themselves. A continual desire to be edified was evident in the number of workshops that teachers chose to attend. These workshops improved the confidence of teachers. This feeling of self-worth motivated them to offer more time and energy to their jobs and raise the bar when it came to output.

The pace of work at Colworth was unrelenting. The high morale of the staff counteracted any feelings of self-pity. However, a few teachers were concerned about the fast pace at which things were carried out at school. Concern was also raised about the amount of administrative work that teachers took home. The school was constantly in review mode, especially regarding policies and systems, and this exhausted some teachers. It was also evident that impromptu gestures of goodwill directed at maintaining staff morale had decreased over time due to a heavy workload.

The principal sacrificed time and energy to accord recognition to the hard work of his staff. This, in turn, led to a greater sense of school pride, a sense of being appreciated, and a desire by the teachers to do more for the school. According to respondents, the tone and staff morale impacted positively on teacher attendance, resulting in very few teachers being absent. The teachers felt appreciated and trusted by the principal. The principal was seen as a great motivator who was trusted, loved and respected by the staff and always one step ahead of them. He was instrumental in the maintenance of the staff morale.

IMPLICATIONS

This analysis suggests a relationship between the development of a PLC and the management practices of the school. These management practices have a direct impact on the practices of teachers at the school which, in turn, is associated with the level of learner achievement.

The following practices appear to be associated with the school producing the better results: (1) They had systems and practices to support collaborative work, (2) they ensured that monitoring and moderation of planned and assessed work occurred, (3) they focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning, (4) they adapted practices in order to improve learner achievement, (5) there was evidence of mutual care, respect, and collective responsibility, (6) they visited schools producing better results to inform their practices, (7) they operated within a cluster of schools formed with the aim of improving teaching and learning, (8) problems were addressed and resolved as soon as they became apparent, and, (9) the SMT operated collaboratively. These practices created platforms for collaboration and a nurtured positive morale.

In general, these practices were not present or well-developed in the school where learners achieved poorer results. The following characteristics were evident at the school with the lower results: (1) In the instances where systems and practices were established, they were not uniformly implemented across the phases, (2) monitoring and moderation was adhered to in certain phases only and were not always followed through, (3) the problems experienced at the school prevented teachers from focusing completely on teaching and learning, (4) practices were not adapted to improve learner achievement, (5) evidence of mutual care, respect, and collective responsibility were found in isolated incidences only, (6) the school did create opportunities to learn from better practices elsewhere, (7) problems were either ignored or resolved superficially, only to resurface at a later stage in a more serious degree, and, (10) the SMT operated in a fragmented manner which was detrimental to the tone of the school. Consequently, the potential positive contributions of staff were not utilised. Limited collaboration and high levels of frustration were present.

Ironically, what both schools had in common was the strong influence of the individual principal. At Meadowlands Primary School this had the effect of inhibiting systemization of practices, undermining collaboration and morale, and minimizing the potential for positive contributions by individuals. At Colworth Primary School, on the other hand, the principal promoted systems, collaboration and positive morale, and enhanced the potential for positive contributions by individuals. This suggests that there is considerable potential that could be recruited at Meadowlands, given a different approach to management. It also raises the question as to whether positive practices at Colworth Primary School are sufficiently embedded in the organisation to be sustained without the presence of the particular principal. These are questions for another study.

This study confirms the insights, emerging from the literature reviewed in chapter two, that particular features of PLCs are associated with enhanced learner achievement. These include the centrality of teaching and learning to all organizational practices, the importance of a culture of mutual care and responsibility for learner achievement and the capacity to turn aspirations into reality.

However, the study also raises questions about the degree to which a PLC is dependent on the presence of a charismatic leader, and whether the PLC can be sustained once such a leader departs.

REFERENCES

Bogdan, R.C. and Biklen, S.K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (2nd edition). Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Christie, P. and Lingard, B. (2000). *Capturing complexity in educational leadership*. Unpublished paper presented at AERA, Seattle, 10-14 April 2001

Christie, P., Butler, D. and Potterton, M. (2007). *Schools that work*. Report to the Minister of Education. 13 October 2007.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*. (6th edition). London: Routledge

DuFour, R. and Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD Press

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. London: Cassell

Fullan, M. (2000). The three stories of educational reform. *Phi Delta Kappan* April 2000:581-584

Hargreaves, D. (1999). Helping practitioners explore their school's culture. In Prosser, J. (ed.) *School culture*. London: Sage

Hayes, D., Mills, M., Christie, P., and Lingard, B. (2006). Schools can make a difference. In *Teachers and schooling making a difference: productive pedagogics, assessment and performance*. New South Wales: Allen and Unwin

James, C. (2007). *Collaborative practice: The basis of good educational work*. <http://www.mie.sagepub.com> [7 March 2008]

Leedy, P.D. (1993). *Practical research: Planning and design* (5th edition). California: Macmillan Publishing Company

Lingard, B., Hayes, D., Mills, M., and Christie, P. (2003). Leading the field. In *Leading learning*. Philadelphia: Open University Press

Maxwell, J.A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE

Pendlebury, S., and Enslin, P. (2001). Representation, identification and trust: Towards an ethics of educational research. *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 35(3):361-370

Republic of South Africa. (1996). *South African Schools Act (No 84 of 1996)*. Government Gazette No 17579

Robbins, P., and Alvy, H. (2004). *The new principal's fieldbook: Strategies for success*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD Press

Sagor, R., and Barnett, B.G. (1994). *The TQE principal: A transformed leader*. 4. California: Corwin Press, Inc.

Slater, L. (2008). Pathways to building leadership capacity. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership* 36(1) 55-69

Spillane, J.P. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Spillane, J.P., Halverson, R., and Diamond, J.B. (2004). Towards a theory of leadership practice: A distributed perspective. *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 36(1):3-34

Stoll, L. (1999). School culture: black hole or fertile garden for school improvement? In Prosser, J. (ed.) *School culture*. London: Sage

Stoll, L., and Louis, K.S. (2007). Professional learning communities: Elaborating new approaches. In Stoll, L. and Louis, K.S. (ed.) *Professional learning communities: Divergence, depth and dilemmas*. England: Open University Press

University of Cape Town. (2009). *Faculties of humanities: Student handbook*. Cape Town:UCT

WCED media release. (2009). *Western Cape Provincial Government releases strategic plan for education*. Statement by Donald Grant, MEC for Education in the Western Cape. [Online]. 24 November 2009. http://wced.gov.za/comms/press/2009/110_24nov.html. [8 December 2009]

WCED media release. (2010a). *Turning disappointment into opportunities*. Speech by Donald Grant, MEC for Education in the Western Cape. [Online]. 7 January 2010. <http://wced.gov.za/comms/press/2010/2009-minister.html>. [5 February 2010]

WCED media release. (2010b). *Minister Grant reveals strategy to increase the Grade 12 pass*. [Online]. 2 February 2010. http://wced.gov.za/comms/press/2010/6_2feb.html. [5 February 2010]

WCED media release. (2010c). *Release of the Grade 6 literacy and Numeracy results*. Statement by Donald Grant, MEC for Education in the Western Cape. [Online]. 18 February 2010. http://wced.gov.za/comms/press/2010/17_18feb.html. [25 February 2010]

Wolcott, H.F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks: Sage

Yin, R.K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th edition). California: Sage

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX 1: THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND THE INTERVIEW SELECTION

RESEARCH INTERVIEW TOPICS				
Question	No. of teachers interviewed			
Management and Leadership (10)	PL 1	PL 2	PL 3	PL 4
How is the class work, planning and other administrative work of teachers monitored and by whom? Explain what this entails.	0	2	1	0
How is the implementation of changes, as recommended by teachers and approved at relevant levels, ensured?	0	2	1	0
Do staff members feel there are priorities for change? Is there a formal document regarding this? Have these plans translated into action?	2	2	1	0
Which formal school policies are in place? Do they influence the behaviour of teachers and learners? Elaborate.	2	2	1	0
Are the teachers focused in the same direction? Do you know what the plan is and do you feel part of the plan?	2	2	1	0
Would you regard your SMT as being proactive? (cite examples)	2	2	1	0
How are conflict issues between teachers dealt with?	2	2	1	1
How are problems experienced by SMT members, for example, inability to cope with certain situations, dealt with and resolved?	0	2	1	1
How does management deal with crises that might occur? (cite examples)	0	2	1	1
How are the issues that undermine discipline and learning dealt with and by whom?	2	2	1	1
Teaching (5)	PL 1	PL 2	PL 3	PL 4
Who sees to the resources of teachers? Do teachers have sufficient resource materials? Is there sufficient equipment and is it in working order? (<i>also investigation and observation</i>)	2	2	1	1
Do all teachers cover the Assessment Standards for the learning areas that they teach? If no, what are the reasons and implications of this? If yes, how is this achieved?	2	2	1	0
How often do teachers meet outside contact time? What is generally discussed? Do these discussions impact on teaching on learning?	2	2	1	0
What administrative practices of teachers can you identify that facilitate or hinder teaching and learning?	1	1	1	1
How do unsatisfactory learner results impact on the school?	2	2	1	1
Teacher development (3)	PL 1	PL 2	PL 3	PL 4
What proportion of your staff has been involved in teacher development relating to education over the last three years? What kinds of teacher development activities are teachers engaged in? How have these activities impacted on the morale and self-esteem of teachers and on learner attainment? (<i>also survey</i>)	2	2	1	1
Are there any practices at school to assist new teachers? What type of arrangement is this: a structured one or an informal one? (<i>also viewing document if structured</i>)	2	2	1	1
Do teachers feel motivated? What activities, if any, are in place to help motivate teachers? Elaborate.	2	2	1	1

APPENDIX 2: TEACHER SURVEY

Kindly indicate your phase and gender below. All information indicated below will be treated as **confidential** and is purely for research purposes.

Phase: Foundation/Intermediate/Senior (*underline*)

Gender: Male / Female (*underline*)

Please complete the boxes below by inserting an X in the relevant box ☒

1. No. of years teaching experience ☐ 0 - 4 ☐ 5 - 19 ☐ 20 - 29 ☐ 30+
2. No. of years at current school ☐ 0 - 4 ☐ 5 - 19 ☐ 20 - 29 ☐ 30+
3. No. of years at different PLs **PL1** ☐ 0 - 9 ☐ 10 - 14 ☐ 15 - 29 ☐ 30+
- PL2** ☐ 0 - 9 ☐ 10 - 14 ☐ 15 - 29 ☐ 30+
- PL3** ☐ 0 - 9 ☐ 10 - 14 ☐ 15 - 19 ☐ 20+
- PL4** ☐ 0 - 9 ☐ 10 - 14 ☐ 15 - 19 ☐ 20+
4. Your age at 31 December 2009 ☐ 20 - 29 ☐ 30 - 39 ☐ 40 - 49 ☐ 50+
5. Highest professional qualification ☐ ACE ☐ DE ☐ HDE ☐ FDE
6. Highest academic qualification ☐ Degree ☐ Honours ☐ Masters
 ☐ Doctorate
7. Have you completed any formal studying since first qualifying? ☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Were you active in any private studies this year in order to improve your educational qualification? ☐ Yes ☐ No
9. Have you attended any courses at CTLI in the last three years? ☐ Yes ☐ No

10. Indicate the medium of instruction:

10.1. of your education in: primary school: , high/secondary school:

and, tertiary institution when you first qualified:

10.2. in which you mostly teach:

11. At which tertiary institution did you first qualify?

12. Are you in a WCED post? ☐ Yes ☐ No

13. If in a WCED post, are you permanently employed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

14. Have you applied for any promotion post in the last three years? ☐ Yes ☐ No

15. Have you applied for a transfer post in the last three years? ☐ Yes ☐ No

16. Have you applied for any post outside of the education sphere in the last three years?

☐ Yes ☐ No

17. Do you see yourself in the education sector until retirement age? ☐ Yes ☐ No

18. Do/did any of your children attend ex-model C or private schools? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ N/A

19. Are your children's school/tertiary institution fees up-to-date? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ N/A

20. Supply one word / phrase / sentence to describe how you feel about teaching at your current school

APPENDIX 3: PRINCIPAL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Background information (School established 19

Description		Currently
Learners	Approximate roll	
	Average no. per class	
	Approx. % "black" learners	
Staff establishment	No. WCED teachers	
	No. "black" teachers	
	Male SMT members	
	Female SMT members	
	No. SGB teaching posts	
Classes Gr 1 - 7	No. classes	
	No. English classes	
	No. Afrikaans classes	
School Fees	School fees per annum	
	% recovered to date	
	% exemptions	
	Salary of SGB teachers	
Neighbourhood: impoverished, middle class, affluent, etc.		

2. Periods

- 2.1. No. of teaching periods per week
- 2.2. No. periods taught by HODs Foundation Phase (average)
- HODs InterSen Phase (average)
- Deputies (average if more than one)
- Principal

3. Support

- 3.1. Other rooms designated for education / support, e.g. libraries, media, computer, counseling, remedial, etc.
-
- 3.2. Additional individuals employed for support, whether inside or outside the classroom
-
-

APPENDIX 4: JOB DESCRIPTIONS OF PARENTS

Specific job description	Meadowlands	Colworth
Skilled	Business analyst; senior operator; train driver; social worker; police officer x4; salesperson x3; nurse x2; machinist; printer; digger operator; hair stylist; plumber; teacher x9; welder; quality assurer; electrician x2; boilermaker; IT operator; SANDF technician; diesel mechanic; artisan x2; builder; cabinet maker; consultant	Hair stylist x2; builder x4; teacher x6; mechanic x5; au-pair; accountant; upholsterer; IT operator x3; test driver; prison warder x2; caterer x2; truck driver; ground hostess; salesperson x8; foundation phase coordinator; crane driver; nurse; plumber; printer; belt splicer; merchandiser; estate agent; technician
Semi - skilled	Waitress; admin clerk x17; factory aid; driver x3; cleaner x2; security guard; cutter; healthcare; general worker x5; day-mother; shop assistant; receptionist	Admin clerk x18; general worker x5; sell flowers x2; paving; day-mother; taxi driver; cashier x2; healthcare; receptionist x2; cleaner
Management	Manager x8; supervisor x3; foreman x2	Manager x11; supervisor x3
Miscellaneous	Self - employed x5	Self - employed x9; shop owner x3; maintenance x2; engineer; iron and steel; taxis; fishmonger; day-care

Job title summary	Meadowlands	Colworth
Skilled	41	47
Semi - skilled	35	34
Management	13	14
Miscellaneous	5	19
TOTAL	94 jobs for 66 learners	114 jobs for 71 learners

Job description	Meadowlands		Colworth	
	Total	Percentage	Total	Percentage
Skilled	41	44%	47	41%
Semi - skilled	35	37%	34	30%
Management	13	14%	14	12%
Miscellaneous	5	5%	19	17%
TOTAL	94	100%	114	100%